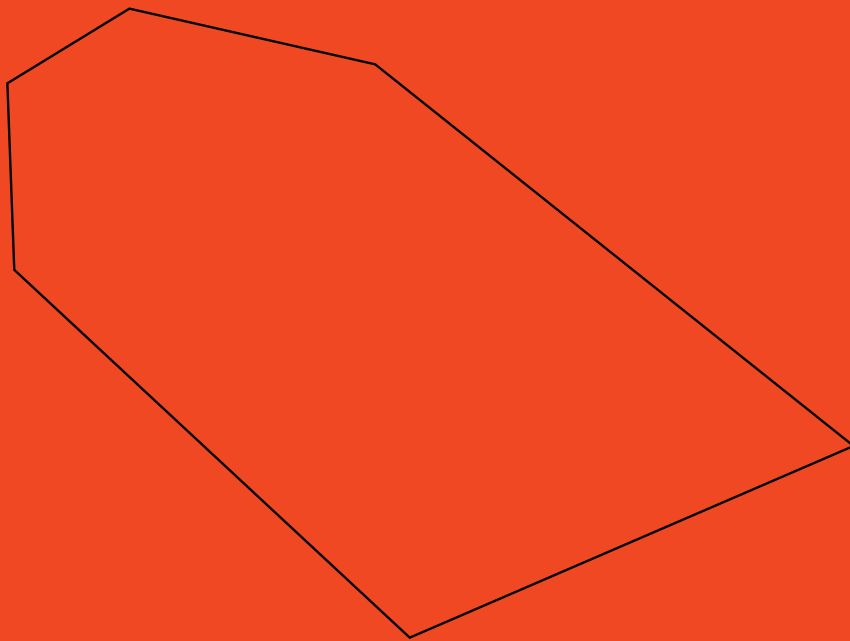


Esplanades:

**the neglected urban spaces
and the potential of design
to change them**



**Zoé Blanchard
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1. Abstract

Public places are a necessary factor for the social and economical welfare of cities. The big squares, here referred to as “esplanades”, often form sorts of vacuums that tend to obstruct urban life. Also, despite an abundance of available information on the importance of public places, the sizable squares recurrently seem to be neglected, both in the real world and in the literature.

In the actual context of important demographic changes across a more globalised but fearful world, the physical connecting anchor offered by the public place attains its utmost relevance. Since the adage: the bigger dimension, the greater impact - advocacy is made that the often overlooked esplanades deserve attentive consideration.

The present document exemplifies a qualitative research combining knowledge from Urban Design to Ethnography where spatial experimentations enter in dialogue with the theoretical research. The social dimension of the public place is considered as central, also the intention of the research is to examine the value of the common and its role in the contemporary urban context, as well as to identify the potential inputs capable of changing the dynamic of an under-used space. Finally the last question is: what planning and spatial elements can foster revitalisation and so facilitate the social interactions in a vast place?

The argumentation works to enrich the discussion on the importance of fine grain design and human research in city planning and aims further to provide practical foundations to trigger change and exploration.

2. Introduction

On an unfortunate day while looking desperately for an absent bench in order to enjoy the sun, the magnitude of the impact occasioned by the urban environment on the quality of the city dweller's life suddenly comes to realisation. Originated from the so generated astonishment and frustration, the motivation to discern the interrelation between the public place and the society consequently took shape. Indeed, in order to gain the capacity to influence the course of an unpleasant phenomenon, one should first comprehend the situation and all interconnected elements.

By 2050 sixty six percent of the world population is expected to live in cities (1). Also, the urban landscape will constitute the main environment for all human interactions. When social bonds are sometimes harder to tie than before, when the fear of the stranger and the unknown every so often takes over as intense population displacements take place, the tangible anchor offered by the public place seems fairly necessary. The streets and squares of a city are the many places of the public realm where individuals live side by side and participate together to in the never-ending construction of society. In order to prevent isolation and discrimination triggered by ignorance and which engender repulsion and violence, it is capital for the different social strata to meet. The living together then necessitates pleasant places that attract people and so foster social encounters.

Further, many writings and studies stress out the influence of the environment on the mental and physical health considering urban planning as a public health opportunity to promote physical activity and socialising (2). As walkability impacts positively on the reduction of chronic diseases, socialising is explained to be intrinsic to the happiness of people (3).

Contemplated with a more political and financial perspective, cities and their design represent a powerful lever for competitiveness and attractivity on the international scene and thus favour the commercial and economic sustainability of a region (4). Drawing in more educated working force and eminent industries creates more employment, incubates future business successes, increases the cash flow but also attracts more tax payers (5) (6). What people remember first and longest of a city is its streets and squares empowering the life that inhabits them. Creating great urban places also makes people want to come back and it benefits the brand image to the outside world.

In the actual social paradigm of extreme mobility and fast paced ultra-connectivity versus the pursuit of leisure and reconnection there is a need of uniting physical places. While society demands cohesion-enabling places, it unfortunately seems that the political instances placed wrongly the debate towards all-safety solutions, bringing the people out of the public spaces by removing every element allowing idleness and conjointly shared time.

The thesis enters in discussion about the fate of the large esplanades, namely the big squares, reserved for punctual mass events but empty of life the rest of the time. A reflection on the multi-layered functions of a space in different periods of time is addressed in a context of necessary densification and ground profitability. With a humanistic dimension the talk is brought about revitalization and place regeneration. Regeneration means commonly to bring into existence again, in biology for instance to remove an injured part and in physics to restore to a favourable state (7). Under-used and neglected squares often appear to require all of this, therefore the present document aims to determine means to bring life back to where it belongs; into the social public places.

What is a public place and what is the role of a public place for society? What input could change the dynamic of an under-used space? What planning and spatial elements are capable of fostering social interactions and thus societal well-being? These are the main questions leading the research and the argumentation.

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3. History of Esplanades

The term esplanade in the present document incarnates every large open area to be found in a town or city, especially used by pedestrians. Taken from the Italian spianata, “flattened”, derived from the Latin plānus, “plain, even”; the word esplanade expresses a large, flat square in a built-up area (8). Usually endowed with a hard pavement, its size represents a substantial respiration in the urban setting. Conceived at another age mainly on the ground of political, religious or economical aims, the large piazza’s type has over the years often seen its existence crumple, its purpose lessened, and its fate made uncertain.

Appeared during antiquity at the birth of democracy, the esplanades were conceived to provide civic gathering places or military training fields and were first located at the confines of towns (Dovey, 2016). Intensively duplicated in the Middle Ages in response to the need of sufficiently large trade places, the sizable places were then gradually surrounded by buildings following the expansion of the urban centres. Alternatively used for commercial and social interactions they have been instrumentalised by the established power since the beginning to control the folk and their actions. Being popular centres of public executions and propaganda diffusion they constituted ideal means to regulate and govern the society. Oftentimes equipped with an eminent historic and symbolic edifice on their edge, the esplanades have grown into natural places of encounter and spectacle. Sometimes also forcedly implemented during major city planning turnovers the esplanades

embody the power and grandeur they are meant to reflect. Interestingly, the large squares set up under the most recent or actual authoritarian regimes are mainly the ones kept a maximum sterile, like they should solely be the markers of order and discipline.

In the recent years with the emergence of a globalized densification the vast plazas have anew attracted the attention of planners and decision makers that had so far left them at an advanced stage of neglect. In the western societies of the 80’s and 90’s with the raise of the ordinary every day violence and rebellion against authorities, the ignored esplanades soon constituted the focal point of incivilities and undesired grouping.

Initially humans started grouping for practical motives and thus gradually formed cities. In order to sustain the commercial, legal, and social bonds of the civilizations, gathering centres emerged in towns. What concerns the evolution of the esplanade, concerns most of the public places, too, with the exception of the systematic neglect of the first ones. Unlike the esplanades the public places in important cities have generally been managed with great care throughout the centuries as they contribute to the international symbolic and radiance of the host. Everyone knows about the Jardins du Luxembourg in Paris or Time Square in New York.

The common or meeting place carries a central role in every society since the early ages of civilisation. The Ancient Greeks invented the agora and the Romans the forum but also the thermal baths - all core places of civil life and its develop-

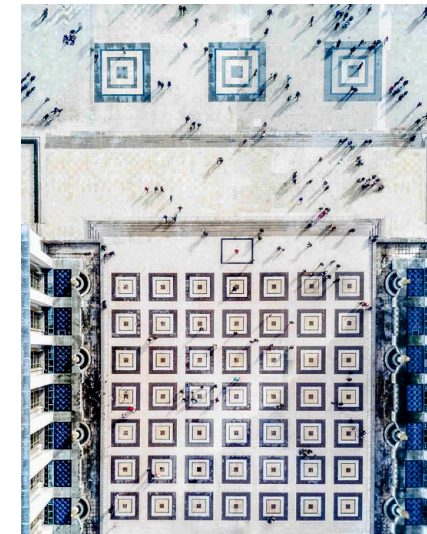


Fig 1. Esplanade du Trocadero, Paris - Marina Vernicos



Fig 2. People Square, Shanghai



Fig 3. Jemaa el Fna, Marrakech

ment. The squares and plazas constitute the essential situational element of any municipal centre where society can train itself to be what it is: “a group of people living together in an organized way” (9).

So the public place is the physical container, the setting of the ritualised practices enacted by the people in the public space in confrontation with their peers (10). Respectively the public space is the abstract location of the life exposed to the community in opposition to the private space which is the one of the intimate sphere. In a sum, the public place is contained in the public space, and what plays in the public field is a constitutional element of the living together.

The inherent characteristic of the public realm is to provide the space to every member of society to reside and express itself. However, nowadays many places we think belonging to public territory appear to be in fact privately owned. When a place falls under private ownership, it means it is no longer made for everyone but only for the people of interest in the eye of the money maker. Ergo processes of exclusion and segregation find their ease in an already divided society. Thus one comes to the understanding that places are vessels of power relations and therefore constitute a topic of preoccupation for many practitioners of social sciences (11).

A city is by definition an inhabited place. It is an ecosystem that shelters a population with individuals of many sorts. An ecosystem designates “a community of living organisms in conjunction with the non-living components of their environment, interacting as a system” (12). Defined by their network of interactions, ecosystems present many types of combinations and levels and so are fundamentally complex. As a rule, biodiversity is what makes an ecosystem viable and sustainable. Transposed to the city, it means that the human-diversity is a necessary element to a workable society.

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12. Ecosystem. (n.d.). In Wikipedia the free encyclopedia. Retrieved from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecosystem> (06/2017)

In his movie “Of Ants and Men”, the American biologist Edward Osborn Wilson juxtaposes the human society and the well-organised and diligent colonies of ants (13). The concepts of interaction and cooperation are emphasized as common crucial means of subsistence. Humans are described to manage their complex organic structure similarly to the social insects. Collaboration and altruism are explained as the genuine fabrication of the collective survival instinct and is what keeps a grouping from destroying among members. the advantage and road to success of organic complex structures.

The success of organic complex structures come from the fact that they provide a role for every individual and are organised in such a manner that each member builds an active contributor supporting the society. A city can be considered as the living umbrella regrouping all biotic and abiotic components mutually nurturing themselves. Evidently holding some irregularities as when the more powerful take advantage of the weaker ones, the society endeavoured to build governments progressively generating sets of rights and duties, as edicts trying to balance inequalities and as tools to regulate and, one could even say, to force subsistence as a group.

Finally, to take a rapid look at the development of cities is to understand how public places emerged and under which philosophy and paradigm they were conceived and shaped. As urban design is a tool of control, the esplanades and their character is naturally the reflect of how they have been handled over time (Dovey, 2016).

At the origin of every city is the organic and continual construction of dwellings and services by people joining a same community for means of subsistence. From hamlets to villages to towns these nests of an always denser society emerged as the human race started to settle down. The gradual fortification of the living locations was the logical follow-up in order to solidify and officialise these groupings of people. Gaining the status of established civilisations the Antique empires for example strived for granite and concrete expansion, erecting all around on the conquered territories engineering feats. The uncountable innovations were means of affirmation of power and

wealth but also the undeniable components of the progresses of a modernised society. In the Middle Ages villages were firstly landlocked by strong walls for reasons of protection but also for regulation and control. With the strong development of import and export as the silk road carried merchants in full swing, the expansion of the urbanisation consequently followed. Cities formed progressively beyond the original citadels to the confines of what were first neighbourly hamlets, extending organically over fields to slowly constitute the first metropolis (14). With time passing societies developed and cities were still growing and being drawn. The living conditions improved with the raise of science and technologies, people lived longer. Thanks to the industrial revolution more goods were produced and mechanical innovations changed the relationship between the human being and its environment. The facilitated access to rapid mobility transformed people’s needs and the perception of themselves radically, feeling free and more in control, not so dependent of their initial habitat anymore.

And soon the dream became to own a car and drive endlessly through a citadel of concrete; the only right mirror of a modern and advancing society. All what seemed to count in this new era was progress, progress, progress. Hence the hegemony of functionalism settled firmly and all manifestations of organic rebellion and uncontrolled lines were repressed.

Under the sincere but reckless aspiration for a deep life’s improvement, tons of mutating urban projects were abruptly erected in a quick succession. Destroying what was before and disregarding thousand of years of experience in urban development, the bigotry for order and efficiency didn’t give much space for humans’ self-realisation but rather left vast, empty places behind. The fashion for big rectangular building and aseptic outdoor parks was expressed without restrictions. Cities were then left with a collection of amorphous spaces (15), places deprived of character and connective elements, as traces of a deviant urbanism that promoted exclusionism and protectionism in public places. Housing projects turned into ghettos, the fractured space dispersed as many small scars behind. But then cit-

ies evolve constantly, see their parts deconstructed and built again. After the modernist paradigm, other urban planning movements set their vision and tried out their principles, experimenting with a never dying playground. This time recognised in its complexity, we fancy the thought that the mistakes of the past have served as a necessary lesson.

The use of iconic architecture to exhale power and sophistication reached its apogee in the last decades as commissioned projects rapidly blossom all over the continents. Nations are more interconnected than ever in the age of Globalisation and never more exposed and scrutinised by the entire planet in the era of mass communication. With a backdrop of image worry and essentially of economical stakes, international competitiveness between cities, big and small, established itself firmly. While in emerging countries entire megalopolis are rashly erected, others decline abruptly, bringing along their population to the confines of despair but also of resilience. One thing is certain: a fertile and productive ground in the care of our urban environments has matured and attracted the attention of investors and politicians in the winds of “urban-renaissance”, attractivity, and user-experience.

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4. The Theoreticians

In order to construct a deeper thinking and understanding about the subject of the public spaces, the present section aims to deliver a review on selected theoretical accounts of seven different authors who brought a major input to the topic. Three important fields contributed to the development of the question on the public space, which can be categorized as follows; public space research, research on space, and urban ethnography. Starting with Jane Jacobs over fifty years ago, each of these writers have influenced the course of the urban design practice over the last years with one common characteristic: the humanistic approach. Indeed while other research fields concentrated their efforts on system efficiency or functional mobility, these particular ones decided to keep focus on the main contributors and principal architects (makers, producers, masons) of space, namely the users. Dissecting the life of our cities, the authors represented in this section have helped to shape our urban centres in a positive manner. Indubitably defenders of the society, they have commonly aspired via meticulous observations to reveal its complexity and underlying machinery, thus reaching for an improved understanding and suitable response to the uncovered needs.

The following chapters will compare and put the different rhetorical contributions (interdisciplinary assessments on space and society) of the chosen authors into relation. The final aim is to weave a conjoint theoretical fabric - a tacit consensus, leading to the construction of a framework for the practical part of the thesis.

The review will start with a definition of the public space and the different methods applied by the authors in the construction of an understanding of the public place. Their key ideas and vision on city and public space will be delivered. Based on the writings the importance of the public place for the society, as well as the relationship of the human with the communal outdoor habitat, will be secondly clarified. Moving towards the explanation of the necessity of increase of use and its triggers, we will stop a moment to consider the challenge raised by the esplanades more closely. Finally, envisioned possibilities and conclusion on literature will open the reading to the second phase of the thesis.

Few different literature fields have been purposely pushed aside as part of an effort to keep a consistent theoretical core that is based on analytical observations and human-centred approach. For instance, urban planning literature hasn't been favoured, as the focus point of this research is on the human scale and on an existing place. Indeed, urbanism is caring principally about the large scale; either about districts, major circulation flows or neighbourhood large turnovers. Further the discipline is strongly focused on practice and implementation of straight resolutions, with an inclination for efficiency and profit, and with a downside when it comes to integrate social factors to the research. Preferred alternative to the fundamentals or urban design has been a wide-ranging and unsystematic research of pictures of designed places from all over the world as inspirational ground to the present work. A subtle contribution to the understanding of successful and non-successful places, those will be showcased to you subsequently.

The writings on pure phenomenology have also been discarded. Indeed the domain treating essentially on the sensual and semiological experience of place is doing such in a too vague manner, that it felt rather far and disconnected from the Cartesian reality of the other authors. The goal of this work is to treat the subject of urban life itself and not its conjecture.

Finally, no literature on collaborative approach has been investigated, as communities do not represent the central point of this research. The focus has well been placed on the public place itself, its quality, and the inter-relationship of individuals and space.

4.1. Public space

4.1.1 Vision, inspiration, aspirations

Cities, places of inspiration of many kinds, have been a lot theorized and written about. As they form the centre of many people's daily lives and represent significant complex structures, it is not surprising that diverse humanistic currents took great interest in it. The authors introduced in the present section indubitably believe in the potential of cities to shape one's life and grant high consideration to their fate. Better understanding as a leitmotif, they trust empirical knowledge to be a necessary tool for the good management of the urban knots. The streets, the squares, the parks are considered the heart of lives outside of the private realm, namely home. Indeed as Jane Jacobs and Jan Gehl stress out, the public space is like the mirror of society and is a very important factor for social welfare (Jacobs, 1961) (Gehl, 2006, 2010). Gehl even adds that the public space is essential to city democracy (Gehl, 2006) and needs therefore to be accessible to all. The "public places" (squares, parks, streets, etc.) are defined by and made of the social contacts occurring in them. Yet this behavioural phenomenon acts as a social glue, reinforcing the bonds of the societal fabric and consequently contributing to the living togetherness (Jacobs, 1961) (Gehl, 2006, 2010) (Whyte, 1988).

Public places have greatly inspired the diverse authors of the present paper, who couldn't refrain from using diverse metaphors and lyrical influence. Jacobs refers to the sidewalk as a «ballet», a spectacle that is created by people interacting

and leading their activities. Often is the public space equally portrayed as a stage, as the physical frame for action and daily enterprises (Gehl, 2006). Also the urban ethnographers build a direct link to the world of dramaturgy invoking the terms of role and audience to their theory. Finally, using chanting and illustrative terms can essentially be considered as a useful way for the theoreticians to a broader audience. Indeed, their main aspiration is to spread understanding about cities and their environment so crucial to the people's well-being. By the distribution of rightful knowledge, a lot can be done for the improvement of the urban environment and to benefit the society. If some reveal their game more openly than others, all seem to care deeply about the betterment of the conditions for the city-dwellers.

4.1.2 Public Space Research - hands on *Jane Jacobs, William H. Whyte, Jan Gehl*

Three very important thinkers have revealed themselves crucial in the way cities are shaped. Together from the 1960's till today, they served the salvation of the urban centres against the neglect of the sterile modernism. Using sharp and sometimes spirited rhetoric along with graphically rich examples, Jane Jacobs, William H. Whyte and Jan Gehl have allowed not only the urban design and political fields, but also everyone else to see the importance of urban vitality, bringing the street level and the user to their attention. These three authors in particular, categorized as members of the public space research field, have

thus been selected together as solid core and main contributors to the theoretical fabric of the present document. Indeed their practice-oriented methods and use of colourful examples are intimately connected, as their respective accounts seem to influence each other and respond to one another. They represent the leading figures of a human-scale and hands-on urban planning, spreading reinvigorated common ethics and ground discourse on the importance of urban life. If they do all agree on the necessity of life in public spaces, they do not come necessarily to the same conclusions.

William Hollingsworth Whyte (1917-1999) was an urban sociologist who defended a human-centric and observation-based approach on urbanism in the America of the 80's. His literary and video publications advocate a bottom-up urban development starting with the genuine understanding of humans' needs and behaviour in urban setting. Supporting his vision of a good city, Whyte asserts the importance of the social life in public spaces that shall contribute to the quality of life of individuals and society as a whole (as cited in <https://www.pps.org>, 2010). To foster this very social life, Whyte formulated a set of principles resulting from his many years of observation on people's lives and rituals on the street. Inspired by the precepts of Whyte and rebuffed by modern architecture thinking of his study environment, Jan Gehl soon adopted similar methodologies making principally use of thorough field research, performing his work as an urban planner and architect. Jan Gehl is a figurehead of a new thinking in urban planning as he is very publicised. The Danish architect published many books, signed various publications in collaboration with public authorities, gives lectures worldwide, appears in documentaries, and is often interviewed by journalists. Gehl made his cause for lively cities famous by means of a well orchestrated communication and his urban architecture practice is active all around the globe. Even more well-known and popular, Jane Jacobs (1916-2006) was an author, philosopher, and activist of architecture and urban planning. Notable to many for her combat against sizable, onerous, and sterile urban developments in Canada

and the USA, she changed the line of urbanism. Her verve and always straightforward discourse used the strength of real-life demonstrative and descriptive examples. Adopting a conversational tone, she raised almost effortlessly the empathy and acquiescence of the reader and also provided an actual understanding to the many at a time when the public was not much concerted.

All three have a very ethnographic-centred way to describe places, people, and actions. In her book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* published in 1961, Jane Jacobs was the first one to expose loudly and incisively the influence of the urban environment on the quality of life and the responsibility devolved to public authorities and urban planners in the woes of society. On his side, Whyte doesn't depress the urban planner profession but rather tends to exemplify and enrich the perspective of the planning of plazas. Rich of his background in human sciences, he opens new roads and perspectives by strictly demonstrating the behavioural patterns in response to a space and other people. His approach is rather neutral and as he objectifies the subjects of his study, in contrast to Jacobs who treats the life on the streets and building corners as her principal narrative subject. Because of the emergency context of the fight for preservation, Jacobs writes somehow in an vigorous and accusing manner, whereas Gehl adopts a more composed voice, putting essentially accent on the possible and achievable.

Also the three authors of public space research incarnate the practical care for the environment of cities and the life that plays in them successively as a scientist, a dissident, and a consultant.

4.1.3 Research on Place - notions *Tim Cresswell, Mark Augé and Edward Relph*

Not content with the lack of philosophical depth and the absence of extensive sense attributed to the word "place", the geographers in the early 70's worked to redefine the meaning of place (Simon & Sowers, 2008, p.1). Attributing high value to the place, the geographers worked

to establish a deeper understanding and more elaborate sense to the nucleus for human actions and intentions.

Part of the inquiring current was Edward Relph, who published a book in 1976 titled *Place and Placelessness*. In his influential writing, the Canadian geographer formulates for the first time the term “placelessness”. Indeed Relph worked on the elaboration of a new conceptual language of the space experience (Seamon & Sowers, 2008); the notions - or spatial modes - of insideness and outsideness being the core of it. He explains the process of identification of the individual with the space and its diverse intensities, from direct to abstract. Through the creation of the innovative analytical framework, Relph provided the tools for an extensive understanding and alternative perspective on everyday’s experience with space. Close to Relph’s theory Marc Augé who himself talks about Non-Places in 1995 is to be mentioned. The French anthropologist theorises on the generic and transitory places such as railway stations, airports, or amusement parks generated by the ultra-globalisation. The author denounces the shallow places of supermodernity that hinder any social bonds or identity creation. While Augé accuses the inherently fleeting places to cause solitude, Relph refers to the ostracising instinctive mechanisms resulting from the experience of a place.

Adding to that, Tim Cresswell, an American human geographer, gives a substantial contribution to the debate about the meaning creation of space. Like Relph, but to a greater extend, he advances the sturdy intricacy of three factors building the nature of a space and influencing each other, namely the meaning, the materiality, and the practices. Naturally like his predecessors, Cresswell is a strong defender of the importance of meaning in the individual-space equation. Assessing an extensive critique on the evolution of thinking on the topic of place, the author asserts that place plays “an active role in the constitution of culture and society” (1).

Focusing on space experience, Relph made usage of the congruent research method called “phenomenology of place”. The approach con-

sists of an interpretive study of the human experience to space, that unravels the disregarded daily life situations and the meaning given by their practitioner, in order to expose the bigger forces influencing the reported experience (Seamon & Sowers, 2008). The phenomenological approach favours a neutral perspective, and very similarly to the ethnography, tends to shade light upon the obvious and uncover the everyday unnoticed by dismissing assumptions and prejudices. In his writing, Augé also utilises a methodology close to ethnography as a base to his reflexive construct. Building on ordinary observations, his discourse however, equally to his colleagues, rises far high to attain conceptual and theoretical levels. The three authors consider the relation of space and human with a broad and distant look in order to reveal the functioning of the engine that creates meaning and self-identification.

Relph provided a significant tribute to the importance of place in ordinary urban life. He is the precursor who brought a new language that facilitated the construction of analytic and working frames. Indeed a common language is a solid discussion base towards the deep understanding of meaning of a place for the user. Similarly Augé puts a strong emphasis on the vocabulary, saying “it is what weaves the tissue of habits, educates the gaze, informs the landscape” (Augé, 1995, p.108). Language is then considered by the thinkers as a tool that creates meaning and a way of influencing the thinking. Further the necessary characterisation and definition of the constitutional elements of a place serve to organise the narrative towards a raised common understanding of the stakes.

If the tone of Cresswell is very analytic as he proposes a review of decades of conflicting thoughts on places, Augé uses an alarmist and quasi-tragic phrasing on ultra-modernisation, never decreasing speed, and loss of anchoring. While Augé’s vision appears somehow narrow, Cresswell on his side accepts the place as a location of conceptual complexity (Cresswell, 2009, p.1).

16. Self-written profile on Royal Holloway University of London. Retrieved from [https://pure.royalholloway.ac.uk/portal/en/persons/tim-cresswell\(7d41a2c8-6df1-413f-9b67-892b73b00697\).html](https://pure.royalholloway.ac.uk/portal/en/persons/tim-cresswell(7d41a2c8-6df1-413f-9b67-892b73b00697).html)

Moreover Relph argues that a space contains multiple realities, as it is experienced differently by different people. He also argues that our daily spatial experience as a whole is composed of these many fragments of experiences of spaces interconnected to each other. The geographer defends a heterogeneous and multi-layered concept of space (Seamon & Sowers, 2008).

Finally, the three authors aspire to understand what space means and what influences on people’s life it holds. For that mean they commence their reflective journey looking at the behavioural manifestations on space and take a greater distance in the aim to unravel the mechanisms of meaning creation and self-identification.

4.1.4 Urban Ethnography - investigation *Gerald D. Suttles, Peter Jackson*

If we state that the ethnographic approach is the common thread of the diverse authors’ methodology, the discreet but present underlying link in the work of Jacobs, Whyte and Gehl, it appears necessary to discuss the discipline, and more precisely the urban ethnography. Ethnography could be shortly defined as the close observation and report of social behaviours and rituals towards a common understanding of complex structures. Furthermore we will question what is meant by urban ethnography.

In his article *Urban Ethnography: Situational and Normative Accounts* published in 1976, Suttles gives an assessment on the development of urban ethnography and the role of its many contributors. Unravelling the defect and shortcomings of certain studies, the author delivers nevertheless a prospectus on the construction and assets of a needed field. Indeed according to the author, ethnography is a valuable research perspective that cares to relate the happenings of the real world and has for purpose to deliver knowledge and understanding through society. Ethnography is the art to build an empirically informed theory (Suttles 1976, p.6), and the investigator needs therefore to keep a neutral perspective. According to the author, cognitively formed theory is

a volatile object, a product of the mind that changes, arises and dies rapidly, and is a cause for the construction of prejudices. To preserve any distortion of the truth, it is important for the field-researcher to disregard any given theory and conserve a stainless regard.

If Jackson equally sets the determination of ethnography as to provide more depth in understanding, he however questions the methodology and sagacity of the carried analysis. In his text on *Urban Ethnography* published in 2009, Jackson indeed condemns the rather opaque methodology of the ethnographers throughout the development of the discipline. According to him, ethnographers seem reluctant to show scientific consistency and transparency in their approach, and therefore remain part of an undercurrent of the social science research due to their “chronic marginality” (Jackson 2009, p.35). Additionally, Jackson alleges that the ethnographers of the Chicago School, contrary to Suttles’ statement, are far from being immaculate from any normative doctrine of their time. Indeed, by taking interest only in communities alien to themselves, the ethnographers contribute to further isolate those who are considered as minorities, namely the abnormal ones. The contemporary geographer raises therefore the question of the supposed neutrality of ethnography. (neutrality further discussed in 1.2.d)

The biggest point of Jackson’s critic on ethnography however concerns the sole use of the situational approach and its negative implications on the quality of analysis. The method offers a rich close look at particular situations, however the resulting analysis might lack in depth and extensiveness. Exposed is then a method that “tends to get lost in the devotion to empirical data” (Jackson 2009, p.24) and so presents difficulties to move towards generalization and comprehensive understanding. On this point, both authors agree.

Suttles explains that the ethnographers invented the situational approach as «an effort to go beyond the static, normative account so available in sociological theory» (Suttles, 1976, p.2). However he concedes that the method is reach-

ing its limit when it is not including the bigger picture. In order to truly understand and grasp the action in its context, the author endorses the necessity to move back and forth between two levels of contexts for analysis ; the micro and the macro-cultures. Indeed combining perspectives on the local and total society, on the small units and its encompassing whole, allows to clarify and deepen the understanding of the functioning of the society.

Correspondingly Jackson refers to the notions of structures and processes, and to the necessity to treat both simultaneously in a research. The processes are the acts and behaviours observed in an everyday life setting enveloped by the structural forces, the « fundamental motives » that influence and trigger all actions. Structures and processes also exerts a conjoint influence on one another, as repeated practices transform and perpetuate the structure. Consequently Jackson's concern is about the difficulties of the ethnographic analysis to include broader perspectives and contexts and to move from processes towards structures. Raised is the poverty of generalization, the lack of any broader theoretical conclusion and so the question on reproducibility of the researches. But if Jackson criticizes rather rashly Suttles and his colleagues in their inaptitude as mediators between the observational and analytical worlds at first, the geographer eventually complies with the coherence of a progressive shift from the analysis of the close to a more general perspective. Ultimately, for both authors, the inclusion of distant and close analytical levels, the travel between big and small is a necessary mean to move beyond the anecdotic, and thus create a sharper understanding of the complex architectures that societies represent.

It is the interest in societies and urban communities that sets down the term of urban ethnography. The development and « change » of the urban structure and society lay at the heart of the urban ethnography research. With its contribution to a «workable theory of urbanism» (Jackson 2009, p.17), the discipline shows motivation in helping to explain how cities work, and revealing the relationship between peer groups and the wider society. Jackson states : «While it cannot

be claimed that ethnography contributes directly to the understanding of structural change, it can make a distinctive contribution in analysing the consequences of those changes in terms of their local impact” (Jackson 2009, p.27). Ethnography is then regarded as a threshold to further analysing. For Suttles – a bit more romantic, the role of urban ethnography is first and foremost to reveal the truth and to spread understanding for a better functioning of the society. The reduction of the social strata gap is its highest objective and is achieved by giving voice to the un-heard and so by fighting the prejudices.

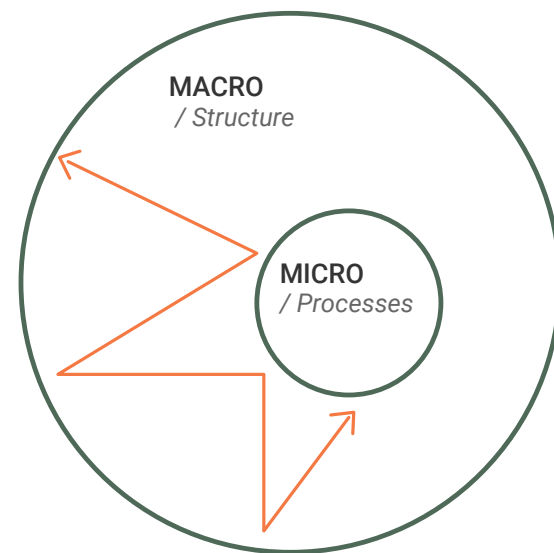


Diagram illustrating Jackson's and Suttles' theory

4.1.5 Weigh the methodologies

Common to all authors is the humanistic approach in their work around places as they treat it in relation to the society. On the regard of their methodologies then, a set of diverse experimental, empirical and introspective methods tend to reveal the complexity of the human being and his relationship to space and place. Herewith absolved from the usual scientific rigour of the dry research established by the inflexible missionaries of the testing room, their research can commonly be categorised as exploratory. It tries to draw the outlines of a manifold figure and apprehend in an iterative manner and with help of detailed observations the supposed problems and potential elucidations and solutions.

The public space researchers make great use of field work, in-vivo observations, and more hands-on research methods in order to build and support their statement, while the geographers also employ a more reflexive way of constructing their thinking calling to their vast accumulated knowledge base. Jacobs, Whyte, and Gehl reveal facets of the place that are more connected with the contemporary reality of the space users and work to locate practical measures for improvement. The geographers on the other hand address the topic on space with a broader perspective, almost a philosophical one, and assign the power solely to their words. The urban ethnographers here represent the ground discipline that freed itself from the restrictive scientific nature of social sciences, thus liberating the various research fields by offering more room for operations. As when the public space researchers talk to a broad public, the geographers and urban ethnographers tend to address their analytical concepts to scholars or to any informed audience.

Among the several recommendations and promulgated research perspectives, we count the necessary focus on the human scale and the important notion of the “eyes on the street” (Jacobs, 1961) (Whyte, 1988) (Gehl, 2006, 2010). The indispensable advise, not to forget the large envelop sheltering the small locale, is stated by the researchers on space (Suttles, 1976) (Jack-

son, 2016). Also is recognized by all the benefit of field observations for the understanding and a suitable executive response. By doing so, Whyte for example captures on video the daily choreographies of the space users performing daily their role as social creatures and so builds a cleverly demonstrative proof for his findings. The evident is stated clearly and in an entertaining manner. Time-lapse and detailed shooting is used in order to not let escape any relevant detail for the understanding.

With the situational approach to some extend as common characteristic, the different authors aim to reveal the unnoticed preliminary with the help of context-specific observations. Yet two authors have asserted critiques on urban ethnography precisely due to its circumstantial character. Their common worry lies on the difficult generalisation and reproducibility of the ethnographic research because of its incapacity to integrate a larger controlling prospect to their cognitive construct (Suttles, 1976) (Jackson, 2006). However, even if the concern on the challenging inclusion of itinerant and multi-scaled perspectives subsists, the geographers here incarnate researchers that succeed in combining micro and macro perspectives, as their conceptual discourse is based on initial observations only to be elevated to a further extend, a higher altitude. The public space researchers also achieve brilliantly the transition beyond the situational approach as they incorporate many analytical levels and recognise the complex interplay of structures by working to provide guidelines to a broad implementation.

Ethnography is the empirically informed knowledge (Suttles, 1976, p.6) and builds the common point to our authors. Far away then from the laboratories the authors necessitate to make use of a inhibited and accepted subjectivity. When being at the same time the subject and the object of the research, a biased neutrality is indeed unavoidable. Undeniably, who can be the best at collecting spatial experience of space other than the human in the space himself? Also an inevitable inclusion of personal accounts in the ethnographic approach is to be counted on. The clear problematic with the subjectivity is that

it is namely opposed to the objectivity; a for a long time considered a necessary factor for any valid research. However, the practical freedom offered by the ethnographic field allows us to reconsider the value of more experimental methodologies and see the inclusion of any introspective accounts as a chance to grasp a deeper understanding of a complex structure. Equally as in relation to the creative instinct of the designer or the architect, the need is made apparent to trust the flair of the exploratory researcher, to try it out, and finally to iterate.

Even if Suttles denounces a “shameless eclecticism” and a “methodological opportunism” of ethnography leading to risks of inconsistency, the other authors defend and demonstrate a less rigid understanding of valid and beneficial research (Suttles, 1976, p.3). Also, the authors’ selection exemplifies a multi-disciplinary, multi-level, and multi-perspective ethnography-laden methodology from which stems a mixture that is significant to comprehend complex issues and hidden ramifications.

4.2. Place and Society

Space and place are two interdependent elements analysed side by side by the geographers. Augé refers to place as the “anthropological space”, as a space where society constructs itself and to space as a non-place, solely an area understood as a geometric space, as a notion of measure (Augé, 1995). Further place is cited as the location of meaning (Cresswell, 2009).

When looking up at its primary definition, the term of society refers to “an organised group of persons associated together for religious, benevolent, cultural, scientific, political, patriotic, or other purposes” (17). A place is then the connecting point necessary to a community. Also a place is in a sum the physical area holding any social creation and represents the tangible notion that is constitutional of a civilisation.

17. Society. (n.d.). In Dictionary by Thesaurus, Retrieved from <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/society?s=t>

4.2.1 Structural forces

The structural forces are all the factors ruling the society in the public space and influencing the behaviours and human relation to space. They refer to Jackson’s structures encompassing the processes and interacting with them (Jackson, 2016). They are the spine and the tectonic cage that produce and simultaneously are shaped and sustained by the social practices. The inter-influence between the structures and the practices is made apparent.

City and society are both complex structures carrying the influence of their own components. Suttles talks about the city as a composition of diverse entities named “inner-city colonies”, which are held together by different types of bonds, of powers, and flow regulators (Suttles, 1976, p.10). The structural forces, these invisible controlling powers, can be historical and cultural contexts, or a shell of “social values, beliefs, and other sacred abstractions” (Suttles, 1976, p.16). The hierarchy and social distribution on the ladder also play an important role in the organisation of a community. Cresswell on his side talks about normative places and their often invisible boundaries, a set of unspoken rules that state what is appropriate and inappropriate in a given area (Cresswell, 2009, p.5). The urban ethnographers and geographers advance the (self-)regulation of behaviours occasioned by the tacit laws of the society (Suttles, 1976) (Cresswell, 2009) (Jackson, 2016).

Additionally to a more tangible level, the ownership of a place, public or private possession, can lead to exclusion and freedom limitation mechanisms. “The material structure of a place (...) is often the result of decisions made by the very powerful to serve their ends” (Cresswell, 2009, p.5). Thus a place can also build a segregation tool under the manipulation of the rulers. Comparably Jacobs untangles the influence of governmental policies on streets, people, and activities, as she urges the decision makers to take their responsibility.

The different forces and their concrete impact won’t be further explicated as they do not prevail in the perspective of the present document. How-

ever, they cannot be ignored as they are the core of the critique made by Jackson and Suttles on ethnography; a research discipline that treats the social practices on an often too specific level and so fails transversal duplication and generalisation (Jackson, 2016) (Suttles, 1976). The structures holding processes need to be taken into consideration even when the attention on place is from an urban design angle rather than from a sociological point of view. Also what must be kept in mind is the influence of governing acts on the society.

4.2.2 Identification

Cresswell defines a place as a social construct which is ruled by normative tacit laws that lead to convey the feeling of being either “in place” or “out of place” (Cresswell, 2009, p.5). But what Relph discloses years before him, is the abstract concepts of “insideness” and “outsideness” felt by an individual in reaction to his personal experience of a place. Far away from the uncomfortable feeling given by the observing and judging peers, Relph describes the individual mechanism of identification with the space, namely the mental process of self-identification generated in contact with it. The sense of belonging or the psychological alignment with a place is an essential factor for the well-being of the members of a community and has implications on their involvement and commitment for it (Seamon & Sowers, 2008) (Jacobs, 1961). Relph depicts different levels of identification with the space, the paroxysm reached by the “existential insideness,” and the «existential outsideness», signifying a profound identification with a space and, on the other extremity, a deep rejection of it. According to the phenomenological point of view, «outsideness and insideness constitute a fundamental dialectic in human life”, that regulate the experience of the human to its environment (Seamon & Sowers, 2008, p.3). Outlining the term of Placelessness in his book, the author refers by it to generic and characterless places, where existential insideness cannot take effect.

The Canadian geographer also develops further on the identification of the space. Whereas the

identification with the space is described as the cognitive and conceptual perception of the space, the identification of the space is the instinctive immediate experience of it. The identification of the space is induced by the physical settings, the activities, and also by the meanings. The meaning granted to a place is influenced by the identification with the space, thus diverse meanings of a same place are created by different people through the various degrees of insideness and outsideness (Seamon & Sowers, 2008). Rightly taking on his predecessor's work, Cresswell emphasises the interrelation of the three components of a place, which he names materiality, practice, and meaning. He stresses each of their influence in changing the quality and the experience of a space. Space is the location of meaning and meaning is a mix of individual and shared sense of place (Cresswell, 2009). The first is produced through the experience in space and the latter is a common matter conveyed through movies, literature or media. Both are strongly influenced by the materiality and the practices of a space.

Cresswell discusses the forms of communication as a mean to shape the various identities of a place, but does not deliberate on the experience degrees of feeling either in or out of place. On the contrary, placing meaning and self-identification in a strong relation, Relph implies that acknowledgement and sense of belonging are a primal condition for the human wellbeing. For the humanists place is a fundamental ingredient in the "being-in-the-world" (Cresswell, 2009, p.5). Relph locates the place, in close interconnection with space, as the governing centre of our actions and intentions (Seamon & Sowers, 2008, p.3). Thus place is recognised as a considerable element exerting power on human perception and deeds. The existentially outsideness potentially resulting from a bad experience of a place leads to acts of alienated rejection that can prompt in his regard the corrosion of civilisation.

4.2.3 Social sustainability through contact

The cement of the society is composed of the social interactions made possible by the public space (Whyte, 1988). Revealed along the detailed footages of Whyte's documentary are the "reciprocal gestures"; discrete or more visible conducts of one person in reaction to another. Whyte argues that the actions and reactions, these symptoms of acknowledgement between individuals in a same space, are the foundation stones of the social edifice. Constituting the primary social contacts, they act as a social glue. A city which constitutes a perfect spontaneous meeting place, offers different levels of contacts and as a city is all about choices, the individual decision in the intensity of contacts is fundamental to the freedom of the city dwellers (Jacobs, 1961) (Gehl, 2006, 2010). Most importantly, what the repetition of diverse social contacts generates, is the elementary trust among individuals necessary to the stability of a civilization (Jacobs, 1961). Like the manifestation of a reciprocal reliance of its members, the visible living togetherness in the shape of small talks or brief visual contacts implies also mutual support and so sustainability of the society.

Lively streets are inherent to building trust. Indeed as the spatial conditions and program influence social contacts, attractive and busy places favour the latter ones (Jacobs, 1961) (Whyte, 1988) (Gehl, 2006, 2010). "A good city street neighbourhood achieves a marvel of balance between its people's determination to have essential privacy and their simultaneous wishes for differing degrees of contact" (Jacobs, 1961, p.59). Whyte refers to the positive impact of places that activate events or happenings, which constitute many external stimuli that bring strangers to converse together. Coupled with factors catching attention, the solely presence of diverse individuals in a same spot naturally initiates contact-making.

As for the importance of social sustainability, the perennial structure self-evidently brings along other viable and beneficial movements with itself, such as the economical or health welfare expan-

sion. Being one of the most essential element of an individual's wellbeing, the social contacts ensure for instance the happiness and durability of communities holding committed and investing people (Jacobs, 1961) (Gehl, 2010).

4.2.4 Increase of use

An increase of use of the public space produces an increase of social contacts (Jacobs, 1961) (Whyte, 1988) (Gehl, 2006, 2010). Beyond expanding the social trust and the social diversity and so favouring the social welfare, lively streets also benefit many aspects of the collective urban life. Helping the general safety of neighbourhoods, they also tend to encourage physical exercise and so the general health state (Jacobs, 1961) (Gehl, 2010). Interlocked with the social sustainability, the economical sustainability also profits from social stability and convergent places buzzing with consuming public. Further, a city sees its competitiveness raised as all the diverse puzzle pieces compose an appealing and seducing city picture, that in turn influences positively the other factors (Gehl, 2010).

With a glance to the topic of safety, Jacobs exemplifies richly how the intricacy of uses, so the mix of uses across time, provides a succession of eyes on the streets protecting and preventing each other from malicious or harming behaviour. Through an effect of self-check and collective management animated streets serve for the auto-protection of its users. Mixed cross-time uses are inherent of well-used places.

Lively streets are a necessary element for a functioning society and city itself. As they provide an unrestricted meeting point where people walk shoulders to shoulders, they help every group of individuals to admit and tolerate each other. Active public spaces provide the suitable frame for the sustainability of a city in which it stimulates the mixing of its members so getting ready to work collectively and establishing the social fabric conjointly. Lively streets are a desired component of any good mixed-use neighbourhood and therefore of any good city (Jacobs, 1961).

Finally, a space becomes a place only when it is used and lived (Cresswell, 2009). Thus a space that gains meaning through increased practice is a place that participates to the construction of the social substance and redistributes the collected meaning back to the host (Augé, 1995).

4.3. People and public space

A place does not only behold influence on the society but legitimately on the people themselves. Direct links of space-behaviour have been demonstrated by the authors of the literature review and serve to determine the impact of the physical space on doings.

4.3.1 Inter-influence

Society and city have a parallel evolution and so naturally the members of a society who use the public spaces of their urban centres participate to it. « We shape cities, they shape us » (Gehl, 2010, p.9). The inhabited places are gradually transformed to match the always transforming needs and aspirations of their inhabitants. But further than reflecting the way we live, the physical frames of our actions carry a responsibility in the way they are conducted. Every tangible element present or not in a space, gives to the user an indication on possible conduct and an incentive for a chosen behavioural response (Whyte, 1988) (Gehl, 2006). Thus a metallic bench can prompt many possible reactions to it - from sitting to skateboarding for example - and certainly induce more responses than no bench at all.

Moreover the user sees also his understanding and cognitive construction of the space transformed by the space itself. As mental perceptions influence all happenings and individual choices, the use of the place consequently becomes modified too (Seamon & Sowers, 2008) (Cresswell, 2009). Hence conditional to an attributed

meaning is the quality of the object's impression arising from the contact with it. In a sum, a place is co-dependent from the user as it exists only through and because of him, and as the user reacts in accordance to the character of it, he is thus capable of changing it.

4.3.2 Spatial behaviour

The authors of the public space research in particular have exemplified the spatial behaviour in connection to the physical space. Explaining and showcasing the natural and instinctive process of regulating distance and closeness with peers, they demonstrated the role of the space into genuine human social behaviour.

The filmed documentary *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* endorses Whyte's elemental theory; people behave in a space in reaction to other people and depending on its design. Proven through time-lapse filming of daily-life scenes, the sociologist illustrates how the human being, a social creature, tends to seek physical proximity of its congeners while appearing to choose specific spots to do so. Thus displaying the phenomenon of self-congestion, a small group of people leading a conversation is pictured deliberately stopping at the corner of staircase in the middle of a hectic pedestrian flow. This rather surprising behaviour indicates that humans are prone to dense contact and impractical conduct in public places, beyond any primarily logic reasoning. But furthermore it is an additional evidence that

individuals' bearing is shaped by its environment and by what it has to offer.

Self-regulation, or the fact that the crowd disperses and converges in accordance with the flow of arrivals and departures, is an analogous group reaction in space and is equally influenced by the spatial features (Whyte, 1988) (Gehl, 2006, 2010). Whyte observes that the junctions, the paths crossing in a place, appear to be the most popular ones. What the observation of the users' movements bring, is that it offers a better perspective on the influence of the spatial features on the users' flows.

Taking on Whyte's work, he differentiates two categories of areas in public spaces that have an impact on our behaviour: the spaces for walking and the places for staying (Gehl, 2006). As a consequence, Gehl specifically examines where people are stopping on a square in order to outline the physical qualities of an appreciated place. Advancing a theory based on the survival instinct and the basic intuition for protection, Gehl highlights that people tend to stand close to edges. Edges are all the elements in a square that provide a relative shelter from the outer world like for example building façades, columns, bollards or simply shades. By having its back "protected" from unexpected incursions, the user feels less vulnerable and hence sees fit to remain still on that certain location. "The obvious explanation for the popularity of edge zones is that placement at the edge of a space provides the best opportunities for surveying it." (Gehl, 2006, p.149). Hence, elevated platforms or well-placed seats are beloved fixtures in a public square (Gehl, 2006, 2010).

As the public space paves the way for many activities, it is self-explanatory that the nature of the pavement has an impact on the way these activities are conducted. A following question is to find out about the diverse requirements a place needs to meet in order to contain actions at all. In that respect, the questioning on the necessary elements surrounding an attractive and used place is developed further in the following paragraph.

4.3.3 Attraction – Retention

The principal assessment common to all three authors of the research on place is that people want to look at other people and be watched by them. Essentially, fact is established that people attract people, and the more people the greater power of attraction has a place (Whyte, 1988) (Gehl, 2006, 2010) (Jacobs, 1961). However, for people to be present in a particular place and use it for a longer time-span, a place needs to contain and support certain functions fulfilling the human's primary and secondary needs.

Gehl makes mention of the necessary and optional activities happening in the public space, from which result the social activities (Gehl, 2006). Correspondingly Jacobs talks about the necessary concomitant completion of primary and secondary uses for the diversity necessary to successful urban places. Primary uses are constituted of working places, dwellings, schools, libraries, etc., and are crucial for the liveliness of places. The secondary uses are all the enterprises that grow in response to the presence of the primary users like additional restaurants, complementary businesses, etc. (Jacobs, 1961, p.152). Jacobs advocates for cross-uses, namely various activities that happen round-the-clock and attract diverse types of users. Diversity is a key factor for effervescent and attractive cities and if mixed primary uses and an ensured variety of users are part of the means to attain a necessary dynamism, so are the density and the variety of places (Jacobs, 1961).

Contrasting with Jacobs' attention relatively fixated on the services and commercial offering, Whyte puts a special accent on the practicalities or tangible features for specific human behaviours and practices to occur in the public space. Imperative are the physical elements responding to the most basic human needs as for example to sit, to hear, to talk, to walk, to see and to eat (Whyte, 1988). The primary wish of people to sit in a place is emphasized. Indeed it appears that the most occupied squares are the ones offering their users a place to stay. A highly interesting discovery would be the transformative power of

movable urban furniture and its demonstrated influence on social interactions. Whyte shows to the viewer the rather amusing ballet of chairs and the human's urge to take a certain control over the design of the place to make it his own. Demonstrated is the popularity of such places over less malleable ones, thus leading to the conclusion that flexibility enhances the usability of a space. Additionally the researcher states the successful character of places offering various sitting facilities, giving the users freedom of use, and free choice.

Disciple of Whyte's theory, Gehl also credited the architectural qualities and spatial characteristics as influent on the popularity of public places. In an attempt to define the most suited dimensional properties for public spaces, the Danish architect gives account in his research on the quality of space dependent on aesthetics, materiality and proportions. Walkability, human scale or protection from nuisance are key words of his architectural conception. Among the different spatial features that encourage a pleasant spatial experience are listed the edges; all the delimitating or standing structural elements necessary to convey to the individual a feeling of safety. Conforming to our resting animal instinct of predation and defence, a low wall or a lighting pole give to the individual a strategic landing position and work as a notional shelter (Gehl, 2006).

Consonantly the author supports as well the soft edges surrounding a square. Embodied by windows, storefronts or cafés vitrines, the agreeable transparency builds a smooth transition between the interior and exterior life. Indeed, the active ground floor frontages multiply the contact opportunities, are therefore attractive and so initiate animation and liveliness (Gehl, 2010). In addition to this, as people seek and appreciate the company of their congeners, increased contacts appear to be a pledge for a valuable place.

Advocate of the fine scale, Gehl presses for the care of details, but defends also a holism in the urban design. He preaches a manifold consideration for people, buildings, places, and variations of scales but puts the priority for life over the space itself. Converging closer to Jacobs' theory, Gehl

elaborates further on the role of the functions than his mentor. Essential to the potential of attraction and retention, practices are to be initiated and supported by the place. Thus the major point made supported by all three authors: the traits of a well-functioning urban place reside in the possibilities it offers to its users.

On the human geographers' perspective Cresswell insists on the importance of repeated practices as the core ingredient of a place. Indeed, the reiteration of acts in a same space contributes to the creation of a meaningful location, namely a place. If one can say that practices are shaped by the materiality of a space and vice versa, the interrelation is nonetheless slightly more complex. Using as main statement that «materiality, meaning, and practice are all linked», Cresswell exemplifies the knotty mutual influence and intricate relationship of the elements commonly responsible for the evolution of each and all (Cresswell, 2009, p.2). In a sum, by virtue of its varied effective factors and unpredictable essence, the ideal place cannot be planned uniquely on the drawing. Nonetheless materiality is one important factor permitting practices to emerge in the first place. Moreover, materiality can favour practices to become recurrent especially when it carves the experience so to please the hedonistic nature of the human. Nonetheless, meaning is just as relevant for their perseveration. Indeed, when the meaning of a place drops, so do the practices, consequently causing a lack of visitation (Seamon & Sowers, 2008) (Cresswell, 2009). Herewith joining Jacob's arguments, the two geographers' writings articulate that the increase of activities on a place enhances its meaning and thus increases the identification with it permitting a stronger involvement from the users (and so engagement). Although the public space researchers are more interested in the tangible effect favouring the increase of use whilst the researchers on space pursue a more elevated debate on causal dynamics, their respective reasoning converge to a same interest in exploited shared locales.

Finally, the importance of the diversity in the invitations to use a place is brought to light. Various factors that bring and retain people are to

be taken into account when aiming for liveliness. With the presence of other people as a primary requirement, the spatial conditions paired with the offering of uses are revealed crucial. Equally considered are the mental conditions and cognitive creation that play an important role in the existence of a place or the place-making. A good spatial experience helps create positive meaning fostering expanded practices that in turn generate a stronger identity of and with the space. Yet a pleasant spatial experience means a good space. Gehl refers to the city life as a process, when the right amount of space sets up a chain reaction of people attracting each other (Gehl, 2010). The same way the tangible conditions of a space can be the original and practical drive that sets in motion the wheel of mutual positive influence between the interconnected elements.

4.4 On wide places – esplanades

When size obstructs the continuity of the city happenings and interrupts the natural urban flow, it is naturally prone to catch the attention of literates on public space. Albeit not as substantial as its dimensions in the literal sense, the subject on vast places has however been a topic of preoccupation for the different authors.

4.4.1 Vacuum and neglected places

In her book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* Jane Jacobs depicts wide-open neglected squares to which she allocates the role of city vacuums. Like a big nothingness separating streets and dividing neighbourhoods, the geographic obstacles exert a negative impact and active influence on the urban experience (Jacobs, 1961, p. 257). She describes these big voids comprising also parking lots, elevated highways or isolated parks as life destroyers and communities segregators. Further she develops on the danger of underused public spaces which become nests of criminality and incivility. Deserted areas often attract illicit, deviant, and antisocial practices for the reason that they are free to flourish away from any direct peers' check. Such large and empty places eventually grow into lawless zone (Jacobs, 1961).

Referring among others to broad aseptic plazas and cars-oriented towns she condemns the heretic constructions and implementations made by the architects of the modernist current that haven't left much space for the individual itself

and have participated to a degradation of the public space. Gehl conjointly argues that a street where there is place only for cars, is a street emptied of its life (Gehl, 2006). «Traffic arteries, along with parking lots, gas stations, and drive-ins are powerful and insistent instruments of city destruction» (Jacobs, 1961, p.338). Thus the places discouraging pedestrians to spend time and inhibiting any human contacts are rightly considered as urban life threatening.

Consequently, every vast deserted plaza can be added to this list on the grounds that their existence and state keep deteriorating inasmuch as they are not given any attention. Eligible for the status of abandoned and neglected places their evolution stands still to the point of becoming obsolete in the urban fabric and so rebuffing always more users.

Vacuums are easier to be defined and characterised by what they do not contend. Hence Jacobs divulges for example the versatile character of nature parks that can rapidly turn out as really good or really bad places in relationship to what they entail or not and to what they are surrounded with. If the American writer argues that a lack of diversity in uses and functions throughout the day is responsible for vacuums, Gehl and Whyte would preferably determine in more detail the physical fundamentals typically missing in big spaces such as seating or tangible edges. With an architectural comprehension of the topic Gehl declares that “public spaces, which, because they are too big and lack clarity, have the character of a no-man's land” (Gehl, 2006, p.61).

Human proportions in cities and a good handle of scales is in fact something that Jacobs and Gehl both advocate. Hence subdividing a broad area in several steps and thus placing dispersed receptacles of activity and animation in order to preserve the continuity of the urban life is an idea that they both cherish (Jacobs, 1961) (Gehl, 2010).

4.4.2 Non-places and placelessness – identity loss

With a same concern about noxious places often emerged for the sake of greater efficiency, more intensive consumerism or accelerated lifestyle, the researchers on space have been arguing on the notions of Placelessness and Non-Places. Caused by the rise of globalization and hyper-modernisation, the decline of authentic « true » places has then been investigated on a broader perspective (Augé, 1995) (Seamon & Sowers, 2008).

For the two geographers the disappearance of real places is caused among others by the expansion of mobility. Contrary to Jacobs and Gehl who defend an urban planning giving room for the simultaneous use of the city by cars and pedestrians, Augé and Relph are distant of the urban planning perspective and stand side on a more extremist vision where the accelerated development of new practices seem to be harmful for society. Augé sees ultra-mobility as the antithesis of a meaningful place and Relph considers mobility as a factor that causes disintegration of the sense of place. Adversely, their colleague Cresswell abandons the idea of a “static” place and showcases a place full of movements, composed of time-space routines. Rightly on that topic the American human geographer blames Augé and Relph for remaining too much connected with the past and in contrast supports Massey's theory of a global place where mobility is embedded in it at every level.

While the common theories of Relph and Augé seem rather radical and somehow alarmist, the given description on non-places reveals itself particularly useful to get the hold of the charac-

teristics and possible causes and consequences of places that do not welcome everyday life. Characterised by the absence of singularity and by the deprivation of meaning creation, “a place that cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity is a non-place” (Augé, 1995, p. 78). The places of super-modernity take the shape of generic spaces that inhibit any genuine relations and cause solitude (Augé, 1995, p.103). With the hyper-mobility spaces such as airports or train stations as the archetype of Non-Places, they are described as hardly identifiable from one another but similar all over the world. Relph correspondingly argues that mass values and mass culture are the cause of the emergence of placelessness. Jacobs refers to a blurred city character and irrelevant places constituting what she calls the Noplace.

Implicating the risk to make attachment and roots creation impossible, inauthentic and unidentifiable places hinder the process of insideness and so precipitate an inevitable deterioration of the identity with the place (Seamon & Sowers, 2008) (Cresswell, 2009, p.6). On the grounds of an absent psychological alignment with a locale, the personal involvement usually embedded in a place and its users tends to vanish (Jacobs, 1961). Perceived as contractual, the communication between the visitors sojourning solely with a specific intend fails to evolve into a proper social occurrence (Augé, 1995). Indeed placelessness is an antagonist term to the one of social construction, and the users experiencing « not-beingness » are considered by Relph as fleeting passive passengers (Seamon & Sowers, 2008).

As non-places do not participate to the emergence of communities, are not relating to a milieu and so are the contrary of the « anthropological space », namely a lived place, they are considered solely as a space. The radical theoretical dualism opposing “space” and “place” has raised critics because of the limited range of place experience and thus lack of conceptual depth (Cresswell, 2009). However, the strong simplification serves an elementary insight into the nature and impact of the physical environment. Thereby inauthentic places are defined as stand-

ardized spaces devoid of character, as places of transit denuded of users’ activity or implication, sans organic society, hindering social bonds and stuck in a perpetual present (Augé, 1995) (Seamon & Sowers, 2008) (Cresswell, 2009). A non-place is told to be a space that retains no identity nor any meaning. In that respect, places of passage – vast entities without spatial markers – can be categorized as non-places whereas they are deprived of the suitable resources facilitating the development of social bonds. Beyond the factors of retention, what the theories on Placelessness and Non-Place advocate is the necessity to keep a certain rootedness, a unique character for the place to have and keep an identity that will be the warrant of different levels of insideness.

4.5 Evolution

Cities are living organisms subject to a constant evolutionary process (Jacobs, 1961) (Whyte, 1988). Augé says, a place never exists in pure form and is invariably remodelled by how people perceive it and how they attribute meaning to it (Augé, 1995, p. 78). When something is steadily swung by the winds of moving interconnections, it means it is prone to change.

4.5.1 Possible change

If one thing stands out in the present literature assortment, it is the crucial character of the spatial environment on people’s lives. Since places carry a powerful impact on the way people live and influences the quality of their existence, the design of our urban centres has to be given substantial consideration and all the necessary attention and this preferably in a sensitive fashion. Systems as big as cities are hard to comprehend, nevertheless the quality of the public open space can constitute an appropriate leverage for the general improvement of the living conditions.

Gehl, Jacobs, and Whyte surely represent the most positive and enterprising fraction among all the authors and so naturally incarnate the figure-heads of the movement of shakers and doers serving the cause of cities. With the evolution of the theory and through their input come also new ways of thinking. Jacobs solicits in the early sixties the citizens’ attention and implication for their environment. After her, Gehl preaches the necessity for inter-disciplinary teams in the urban

planning profession. Mentalities and reasoning evolve while our cities transform themselves. Then thanks to them the tone is set : change should and can happen on every level and every scale.

The fate of cities has been long regarded as the sole concern of public authorities, decision makers, investors or inaccessible urban planners. By now in countries with a strong democratic rootedness, the urban evolution is grasped as a shared responsibility of society. However, the tools remain largely in the hands of the elite and planning professionals. Ergo the difficulty resides in ensuring that the learning and knowledge of humanist theoreticians as such as the ones presented in this paper are incorporated in their doings. “Cities are an immense laboratory of trial and error, failure and success, in city building and city design” (Jacobs, 1961, p. 6). Then if urban professionals shift their attention from the geometrical lines of master plans to the human living the street, deprived from any automotive engine but experiencing its breathing environment, they are so mostly able to design great good for the civilization. With the homo erectus in all its complexity at the centre of the urban thinking the wheel of small changes can so be set into the right motion.

Through his work Whyte stresses out the fact that the built environment and society structure is man-made and therefore can be changed by man. Asserted is the responsibility of everyone for a qualitative and needs-responsive environment.

“We are not hapless beings caught in the grip of forces we can do little about, and wholesale damnations of our society only lend a further mystique to organization. Organization has been made by man; it can be changed by man” (Project for Public Places, 2010). Hence with the prospect that anyone can represent a potential change agent, anyone one who is qualitatively informed represents a valid candidate for evolution.

4.5.2 Continuation and focus determination

The present theory ensemble points out the necessity of lively public places and the need of a transformation of the deserted ones. Thus while the geographers provide better definitions and acute terminology for a deeper understanding of the meaning of place, and as the public space researchers present implementable models for urban activation, the available literature however fails to address in a hands-on perspective the somehow ignored topic of sizable plazas. As a matter of fact, the large squares are generally in practice as well as in theory disregarded and thus neglected. Although the dangers of desolated places, their exclusionary potential, and destructive power are exposed, many of them however remain untreated. In consequence it implies that the available theory hasn’t reached the decisional and executing strata.

Fact is that the prescriptions given by the public space researchers such as flexibility and diversity of uses can appear rather arduous to concretise and particularly difficult to envision on vast places that do not hold much. The second part of the present paper will thus work towards materialising the combined learning and by shedding light on forgotten sizable squares. Indeed, in confrontation with unsatisfying urban design or just the absence of it, spatial experimentation seems a valid strategy in the attempt to demonstrate the possible improvement to be induced from any modest change.

In general there is an apparent lack of knowledge and awareness transmission among urban professionals and politicians. Much informed theory from various sources has been displayed here and these are at all times available everywhere. However, for it to be received and applied, the need for a more condensed and targeted message is felt. The simplification and synthesising of the theory into key learning with a practical accent is something initiated by the public space researchers and which should be carried on and brought to further level.

5. Methodology and Focus

5.1 Project Focus : Hakaniemi

Hakaniemi Square is the exact example of an esplanade as conceived in this document. Of large dimensions, the square, built from its beginning as a commercial hub, is nowadays partly the stage of a daily market for a limited time, and beside official hours a theatre of emptiness. The plaza is every once in a while used as container of sizable events but is unfortunately suffering a lack of visitors when unoccupied by official activities.

As a preamble it is necessary to mention that the conducted field research and observations mostly happened during the months of March to June 2017. The square has since then been subjected to few temporary changes which are consequently not included in the subsequent research analysis.



Fig. 4. Hakaniemi Square aerial view in 1980



Fig. 5. Communists protest on Hakaniemi Square in 1948

5.1.1. A brief history

Hakaniemi Square (Hakaniemen tori) is located in the Kallio district of Helsinki. Kallio was at its creation in the late 19th - early 20th century a workers class living and working area. Genuinely the terrain, like in most parts of Southern Finland, consisted only of hard stone and sea, thus no agriculture activity had been developed in the district. Wooden houses and industrial manufactures were to be found in the quarter. Gradually, the industry owners constructed their rather plush residences along the costal line and Hämeentie - a street, which is today a most busy road going along the west side of the square.

In 1894 construction works were conducted in order to drain out the water and fill the ground of today's location of Hakaniemi square, which was till then still part of the sea. Ever since its creation Hakaniemen tori is used as a trade place. Wooden permanent market stalls were installed on the surface to sell goods, merchandise was controlled and taxed, and a train brought at the spot the oil necessary for the industries' functioning, straight from the formerly principal merchandise harbour - today's Suvilahti. Hakaniemi Square represented the heart of the district, where most of everyday commercial activities were happening. It is only later that the square gained the status of a political symbol.

As the society and Finland developed, the factories started varnishing and the square slightly changed as well. Through the years Hakaniemi square had seen its surface occupied in various manners such as a massive parking lot or a temporary daily market. The square even served as a storage place for wooden stacks in the post World War II times, as the coal for heating was lacking. In 1914 the market hall was first opened, still housing many food retailers today. Nonetheless the square, which stayed public ground, always remained at its spacious dimensions. Many important trade unions installed their headquarters at the periphery of the public place, among others the Social Democratic Party and the Workers Union. It is then naturally that Hakaniemen Tori revealed itself perfectly suitable for sizable political gatherings, and soon

attracted demonstrations and marches. The tradition of using the square for political purposes refers however to recent history, and the square is mainly the centre of the 1st of May workers demonstrations.

5.1.2. Hakaniemi today

Presently Hakaniemi Square is a vast plaza covered with cobblestones surrounded by three dense traffic roads. On its west and east borders are several bus stops serving many lines and the main metro entrance is not far from the market hall on its northern face. Also tram stops are posted in the middle of Siltasaarenkatu which leads to Hämeentie. An underground parking and several parking lots are located around the plaza. The square represents a major public transportation hub.

Its connection to the shore line is cut by Hakaniemenranta, and the pedestrian access to and from the square is unfortunately rather limited and perilous as the priority on its circumference is obviously given to the cars. Certainly it can be stated that at the present day the square is dominated by the automobile realm.

Many services, several restaurants, and plenty of shops are located on its extended perimeter on the other side of the roads. Behind the market hall building stands one of the oldest publicly owned theatre. On the eastern hand of the esplanade is hidden behind a desolated narrow gravel square a façade rich of local shops and restaurants. Altogether, the square is equipped with many physical barriers and is so deprived of a profitable inside-outside relationship, namely a "shop-to-street" automatic strollers attracting effect due to the permeability of the façades.

Due to its functions as a transportation hub and as a daily market place holding under tent cafés and because of its central urban location near popular areas and businesses, Hakaniemen Tori presents already many opportunities for users to go through the space during the day. It is noted that the square does not possess any other seating facilities than the ones provided by the private sellers, consequently users that stay to enjoy the

Source: Interview with Mikko Lindqvist from the Helsinki City Museum on the 30.03.17

5. Methodology and Focus

place are mostly the market customers, people with buying power. Furthermore, as the market closes everyday before four in the afternoon, the market hall at six, the esplanade of about 6'500 square meters is deserted in the evening and at night. Indeed the square is lacking of retention capability during the "lost" hours, when in fact it would be able to offer everything so not to be ignored. With crowd-pleasing places nearby and a sustained traffic flow at every hour, the square represents an ideal white canvas for things to happen. However it re-

grettably seems today that Hakaniemi is a space that doesn't expect anyone to do anything there.

5.1.3. Hakaniemi vision

Distinct entity of the Helsinki 2050 plan, Hakaniemi neighbourhood is planned to be subjected to certain changes. It has not escaped from the new trend of urban boulevards sponsored by the motion, and so Hämeentie artery is projected to become more walkable, with less cars and



Urban analysis of Hakaniemi Square
 Informations retrieved from <https://servicemap.hel.fi/unit/23229> and <https://goo.gl/maps/pAD236ZhAjA2> (01/2018)



Hakaniemi Square in the afternoon

more trees (18). This scenario will incontestably have a positive impact on the attendance ratio of Hakaniemi Square, as nowadays few people are walking the connective street and many use then the piazza only as a transportation hub and not as a leisure and pleasant place. By slowing down the tempo surrounding the square, it can be presumed that the attractiveness of the large square will increase.

Additionally, in line with the recent ambition to improve the Helsinki water front, the cost line of Hakaniemi will see itself endowed with a prominent architectural hotel building and with a brand new accessible recreational shore line. These attraction points will also attract more bystanders. (Whether the project's nature is an inclusive one represents another debate.)

Concerning Hakaniemen Tori itself, only the renovation of the market hall is planned and already in process. When asking the Head of Communication of the Helsinki City Planning Department on the willingness to implant seating facilities on the square, difficulties in management and hard maintenance reasons are pled (19).

The new urban plan was proposed by the Helsinki City Planning Department (called today the Urban Environment Division) and accepted by the City Council of Helsinki in 2016. An online survey as a part of the design process was introduced for one month in 2013 where citizens could give their opinions on different areas of the city regarding densification, preservation, and improvements (20). Consulting the written assessments on the square, Hakaniemi Square is mainly perceived by the respondents mainly as an area requiring drastic improvement. As they recognize the potential of the square, they qualify it as a dreary, reckless-looking, and under-used place. Nevertheless, in the zeal to activate citizen's participation, the project seemingly failed to represent the population's wishes. Indeed, the results of the online survey can be put into question regarding the evident interviewees sample limitation. Only 4.700 people amongst 602.200 inhabitants participated to the survey. Additionally, as the survey was only to be found online and for a short period of time, its accessibility was restricted. Only granting access to a certain part of the population, the

survey can therefore be contested in its role of quantitative research and open public consultation.

5.1.4 Hakaniemi possible

The voted urban plan advances the core concern of densification of the city, namely the necessary strategy to create a sustainable city by constructing more while sparing a maximum the ground. In the case of Hakaniemi Square there is a vast amount of available ground that is planned to stay open. So why isn't it at its best or better used?

In resonance to the diverse authors on the necessity of qualitative open spaces for the well-being of a society and in echo to Jacobs' prerequisite for multi-layered activities for space activation, we understand that careful urban design on place is a fundamental of a positive urban life. Looking at the projected future of Hakaniemi neighbourhood, one main striking interrogation remains: how will Hakaniemen Tori retain its users? Will it manage to offer to its visitors and passers-by opportunities to enjoy the urban area and compose the city life ? At the vision of today's attention given to the square on plan one can doubt. Helsinki 2050's main strategy is to strike towards densification, a term equating a "happy city" according to the Head of Communication. Then why doesn't the ambition for the improvement of existing sizable open spaces seem to come along?

As much as the big scale and a broad vision are necessary for the good functioning of a city, the small scale in planning should also be considered in order to remain close to the needs of the people. Hakaniemen Tori, originally conceived as a place of exchange, should see its status made perennial by the multiplication of invitations and the possibilities it offers. The present document claims the potential of the esplanade and considers it as a possible space where urban life could bloom from every corner. No romantic prose is intended here, rather it is the talk of "urban life" as a antithesis to desolation. The term encompasses the best and the worst aspects of it, and yet it

depicts at least something. People need to get the chance to create the life that surrounds them and this urban life is the one that generates the social bonds that holds a society together. Additionally to the concerns over an empty square, the preservation of the identity of Hakaniemen Tori is here at stake. Its popular nature seems endangered by the high standard constructions planned by the shore. In order to restrain the negative effects of gentrification and resulting social exclusion, it is believed that a lively and busy square, accessible to the many at any time, is necessary.

In sum, the City is knowledgeable about the lack of attractiveness of the square but is seemingly not susceptible to take action soon. Nonetheless there are signs showing that the authorities are prone to implementing a gradual change in the city life. Indeed Helsinki recently implemented motions to foster urban life, such as the facilitated setting up of terraces on parking lots. It shows that, in spite of its stiff silo structure which makes any implementation difficult, the City has the growing willingness to make the capital lively and usages evolve.

In this prospect, the research subsequently presented in this paper aims to frame suitable development points for the revitalization of esplanades like Hakaniemi Square. With the interest to potentially inspire indeterminate authorities and planners, the present document desires to encourage each and every to envision and foresee potential in every place.

18. City Planning Department of Helsinki (2013). *Vision 2050: Urban plan - the new Helsinki city plan* [Online]. Retrieved from https://www.hel.fi/hel2/ksv/julkaisut/yos_2013-23_en.pdf, 03/2017)

19. Interview with Heikki Mäntymäki, Head of Communication, Helsinki City Planning Department, 12/2016

20. The results of the Helsinki 2050 map survey [Webpage]. Retrieved from <http://yleiskaava.maptionnaire.com/en/> (03/2017)



Hakaniemi Square on an early Saturday morning

5.2 Methods

Wondering what would make a great public square, a place that would be appreciated and so get used by the people, the direction of a qualitative study has been chosen. In order to find out what people care about in public spaces and what they are lacking in abandoned ones, diverse methodologies have been put to use. Partly following advice and practice from the literature, instinct and exploratory design has also been put to contribution. With an inclination for fieldwork and micro-to-macro perspectives, the different disciplines form a versatile methodology seeking to frame a complex and multi-faceted subject of study.

5.2.1. Ethnography

Ethnography as the first main approach, techniques like field notes, photography, tracking, mapping, and sketching were employed. Visiting diverse piazzas and many times Hakaniemi Tori, the goal was not only to feel the atmosphere of those squares, but also to understand what people were doing on it and how, and eventually why. Like Gehl, Whyte, and Jacobs, the scrutiny was placed at street level and on small scale, in an attempt to truly understand the subjects of research, namely the space and its users. The individual variation of ethnographic approach

used in this project, consists of the act of collecting a mix of immediate personal impressions and social interactivity observations in a given space along with physical spatial considerations. In a second instance, the content of the rough collection has been processed and put into the shape of graphics and meaningful stories serving the thesis' discourse and the project's development.

The research questions stated at first were still the same and so provided guidance for the observations. Investigating the spatial features that can effect and encourage social interactions physically or psychologically, attention was put onto social behaviours and their immediate surroundings. Influence factors like fixtures, surfaces, services, activities, but also weather and sound were recorded. Following Jackson's precept on micro and macro perspectives (Jackson, 2016), thoughts and accounts on the Finnish culture came completing the jottings. Further, with concerns for the representativeness and legitimacy of the research, a comparative analysis on international ethnographies on space was conducted.

The ethnography on a space holding people was conducted in the manner of a participative observation. The immersion as an anonymous space user brought the research to entail both



subjective and objective accounts. The choice not to talk to people but solely observe what is happening was taken in order to focus on the specific space-behaviour linkage. The decision to experience the space as a regular user was made so to grasp the essence of the place. On the contrary to many ethnographic studies, the normative population constituted there the observed community. No specific social strata was taken in consideration but the large spectrum of individuals from diverse backgrounds, a generic crowd performing similar patterns of use in a given space. The proper everyday of the space was the concern here. Thereupon, the notion of time linked to the occupancy rate and related activities became also a centre of interest.

Ethnography as a discipline is here useful to humanize the often too dry process of urban planning and so deviates the attention from building plots and traffic diagrams to the direction of those individuals who are the lifeblood of places. Further, ethnography is the art to formulate and make palpable sensitive perceptions and hidden structures while reaching a wider audience. And it is indeed in the interest of the present paper, like of some of the previously cited authors, to raise the general concern for the places where we live.

5.2.2 Interviews

Six qualitative interviews have been conducted in pursuance of a deeper understanding on the perception of the esplanade by different subjects. In the first part the broad vision and appreciation of the square were explored. The symbolic meaning of the place and the general understanding as part of a group were targeted there. On the way to a thorough evaluation of Hakaniemi Square, which included a rating of both its shortcomings and potential, the interviewees were also brought to deliver more generic information on their motivations and habits in the outdoors. To uncover their user's type was a strategy to tie the answers to the personal context of the respondents and also to gain deeper knowledge on the general and common expectations of public places. Finally, in order to better apprehend their relationship to the space and correspondent usage, the subjects were asked to trace with arrows and circles their usual path and standing locations on a plan when visiting the square. Additionally, the unvisited parts of the square had to be indicated by hatches.

The interviewees' sample was equally composed of women and men between the age of 30 and 75. Among them were three Finnish persons and three expatriates from Brazil, Italy, and Costa

Rica. Resulting from a rather random selection the gender and ethnic parity had deliberately been balanced and three different age groups were represented, even though the respondents belonged to the majority (four of six) to the 30-45 years faction. Following the perspective of a qualitative research accent has been put on an extensive and comprehensive data collection and for that matter the diverse testimonies and narrative accounts have equally been transcribed. Furthermore this implied that the sample remained small.

The guidance of the questionnaire is kept as neutral as possible, still the interview moved towards the end into an open discussion, where my personal opinions were also made apparent. Slightly biased by my input, some of the answers however gained a more critical and argumentative level.

5.2.3 Experimental design

Finally aiming to answer the question “How to revitalize an existing big place?”, a more hands-on technique was favoured. Thus a second phase of exploratory research was conducted. In order to verify and apply the learning amassed through the literature and the field observations, interventions in the space were conceived and carried out. Experimental design set itself as the most logical path to test possible keys to increase the use and the quality of the space. As when, like in our case study, a public place doesn’t seem to fulfil the functions it was conceived for, the most suitable way is to try out any slight change to see a difference happen and so gain practical and contextual knowledge. Further, in the prospect of convincing reluctant parties that more could be done for the esplanades, the adage “proving by showing” was followed.

The interventions were designed to remain simple and discrete. No glaring intrusion in the everyday life of Hakaniemen Tori was intended, as the observation foci were the daily-life enablers of the gradual construction of the ordinary social bonds. Intent was to provide spontaneous and silent

invitations to do something on the square without gathering people around a common organized and advertised event. As the research is inscribed in the middle-term and looks for implementable quick results (or easy fixes), it required a study on small means with a big and possibly repetitive impact.

5.2.4 Hypothesis and actions

The stated methodology bears a proclaimed non-scientific approach and an assumed subjectivity. Indeed as both the observer and the subject of the study, the ethnographic accounts can possibly remain untouched by my own thoughts and feelings. Further the sample of interviewees was limited and so the results are not representative of the majority. However rich and broad accounts have been gathered to feed the intuition of the designer and the emergence of clues. Certainly with the aim to create a synthesis on meaning, practices and materiality so to reveal the factors of attraction and repulsion of a space, many methods were cumulated and combined in a common instinctive research proceeding.

Qualitative studies bring along hypothesis. Hypothesis are as many formulated possibilities to bring change. And intuitions need to be tested to enter the circle of action and not remain in the passive distant contemplation. The exploratory research and field research made it possible to uncover more aspects and facts than it would have been possible behind a desk. No ignorant can be a genius. Consequently, the present document argues that care in immediate real-life and consciousness in human scale is more likely to implement successful transformations.

6. Research

6.1. Ground Knowledge

6.1.1 A tale on a vast place

On a sunny afternoon in May last year I suddenly came to perceive Hakaniemi Square in a new light. To my surprise the square I used to portray as the gigantic empty place where one impatiently waits for a bus, shivering at night, exhausted by traffic noise at day, was transformed into this cordial and animated urban square. A multitude of bright orange and white triangular canopies were scattered on its surface, forming a cheerful colony in its centre. Somewhat rough and unpretentious and with a palpable neighbourly spirit the atmosphere felt typically Finnish; nothing effusive, only in the sincerity of simple things.

With the biggest tents settled in its heart operating as cafés, the esplanade became a lively town square framed with few vegetables stalls and arrays of flowers. Some people were seated on terraces provided by coffee tents and I decided to join them and comfortably enjoy the sun as well. The rudimentary and somehow out-dated tables and stools, built of galvanized tubes, orange metal sheet, and red artificial upholstery, offered a pleasant seating. Interestingly, once in the middle of the square the roar of the cars became less present and the seagulls calls acutely audible.

The cafés' customers were quite diverse but they all had a cup of coffee in front of them, few of them as well a plate with a sweet pastry. Some people looked around, others were reading, couples discussed. A young boy wearing a blue cap threw few coins into the guitar case of two musicians facing the assembly on the terraces. A man in his thirties was reading the newspaper, a stroller by his side. Next to him, two young women with sport outfits catch up on their respective lives. At the square's edge a horde of busy bees with shopping bags came and went around the flowers stalls. Behind the tents and close to the small street, several dog owners would decrease the average pace of

walkers crossing the square. A woman carrying a big handbag sat on the concrete base of a traffic signpost and was deeply engaged in a conversation on her mobile phone. Many commuters were standing under the bus shelter, old ladies sitting on the metallic bench with their grocery bags next to them were patiently waiting for the bus and looked around.

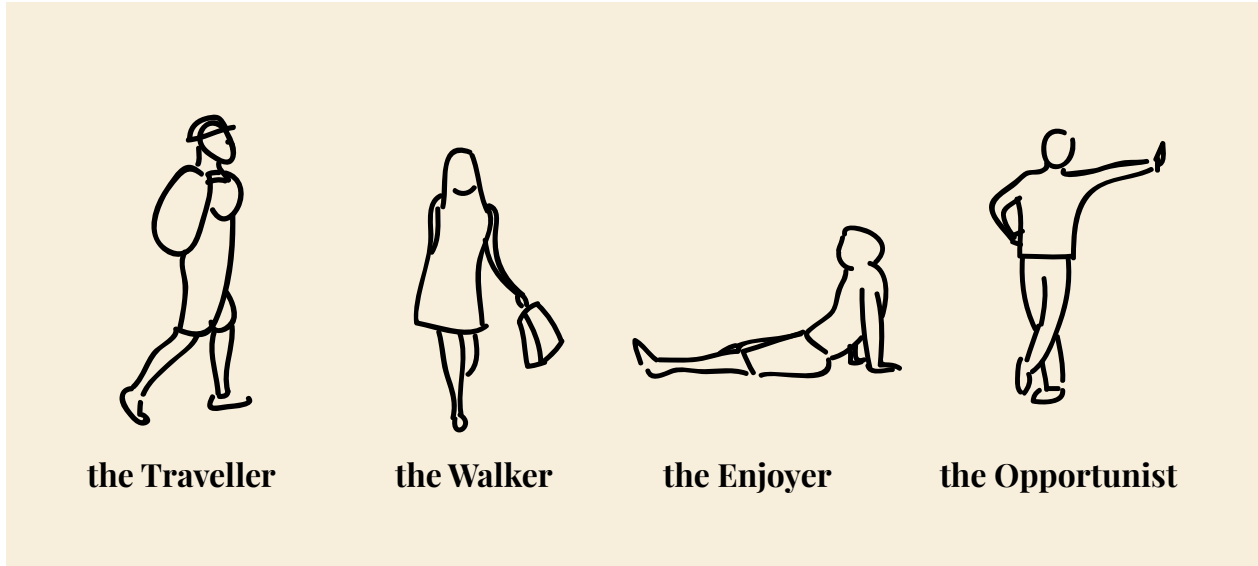


Esplanades

On the square at busy hours, few different categories of space users can be identified. All part of a common dance troupe, they collectively build the tact of the vast place. The Travellers, are the determined fast walking people. They have a clear goal in mind and use the square only for circulation purposes. Using the same mean of transportation, we can spot the Walkers, who wander around and enjoy the journey through the space. Another category is given the name of the Enjoyer, which spends a good amount of time and occupies the place. These users may be walking but are mostly seated or standing. The collective space represents a specific destination for them as well as a routine location for activities. Finally, resembling the Enjoyer in his behaviour, we list the Opportunist who stays in the space for a determined action and a short amount of time. This category includes the people making usage of the space for waiting purposes, taking a short rest to make a phone call or buying something, or for example tying detached shoelaces.

During the market hours, people are in general not spending much time on the square. With an average maximum of 15 minutes occupancy even among the Enjoyers, the strollers are all the more quickly leaving the perimeter. Indeed as they are no public seating facilities, the visitors who are not customers fail to be retained by the esplanade. In fact, this critical point was raised by most of the interview's participants and is the most striking when considering the spatiality of the square.

Also noted is the potentiality of various users brought by the local life style. Indeed it is presumed that the empowered liberal professions, the progressive working culture, and the lengthy shared parental leave help building a good customers and users base.



Succeeding the first visit, on a late weekend morning, I found Hakaniemi Square busier then ever. The market activities were running in full swing and many individuals visited the square. Lots of young families walked slowly between the myriad of tents and were later seated on a terrace eating porridge from disposable bowls. A mother helped her two-year old son with his breakfast, while the father entertained the older daughter. Elderly people conversed with the vegetable sellers, a younger group of adults discussed loudly around the small round tables, few couples in their tender age checked out the few second-hand and craft furniture stands. Many businesses were serving warm food, a stand grilling reindeer sausages was spreading smoke all around the tiny streets formed by the tents. The sun was equally shining high in the blue sky that day and the fresh air encouraged people to turn their faces towards the warm star.

However, despite the diversity of occupations filling the square on weekends, the visitors sample is rather limited and only three age-groups seemed predominant, as the younger population was severely misrepresented. Obviously, Hakaniemi Square’s market does not symbolize for everyone a great manner to spend a Sunday afternoon. On the side of one interviewee, the following argument was actually advanced: “I wouldn’t avoid it [Hakaniemen Tori], but I wouldn’t think of going either.”

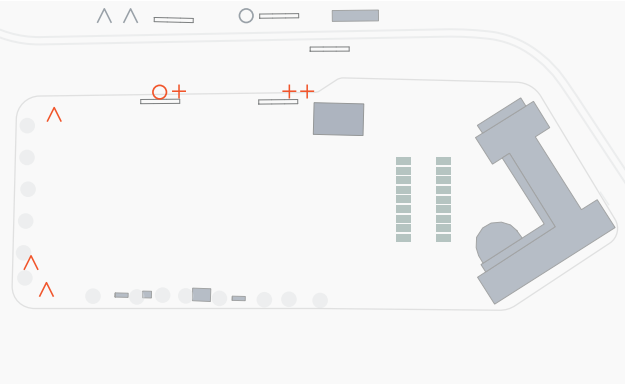
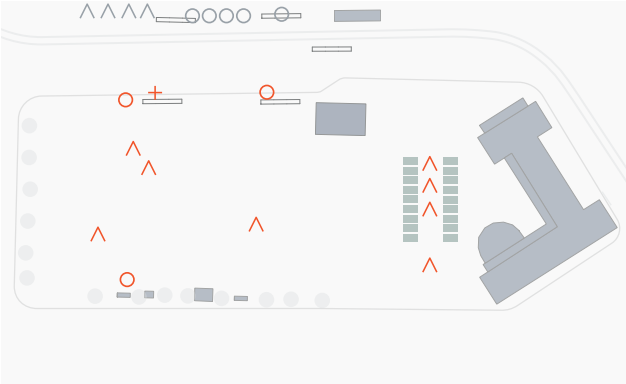
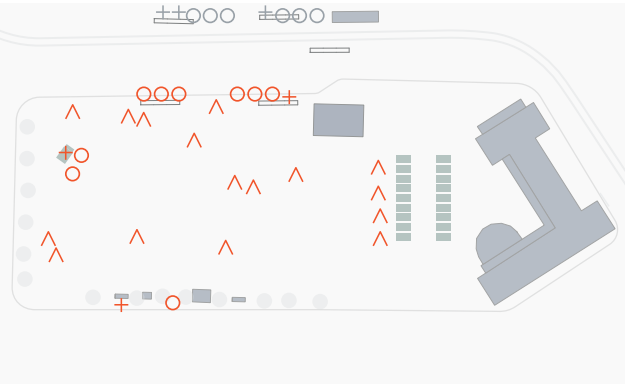
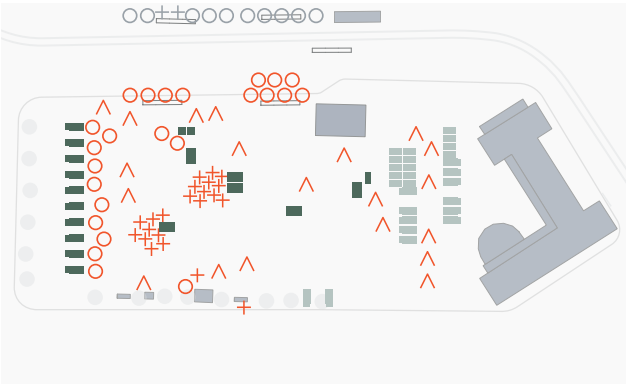
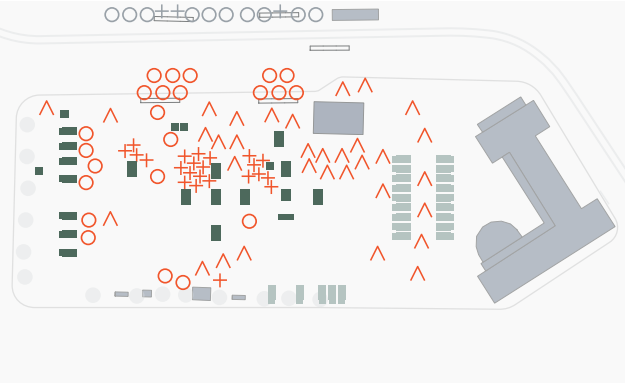
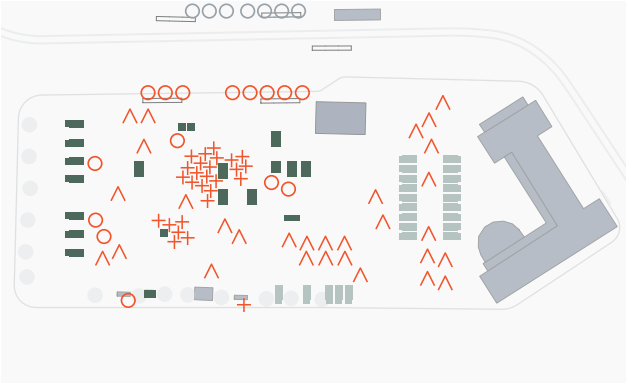
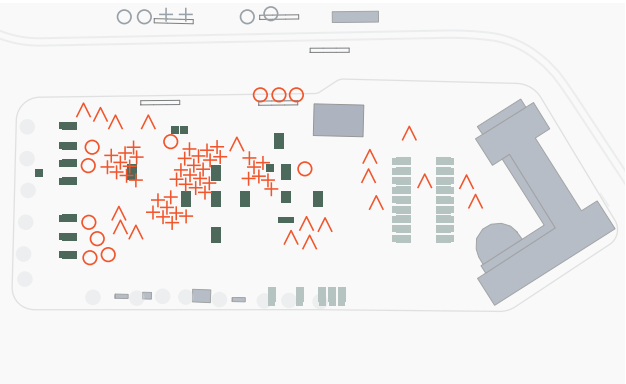
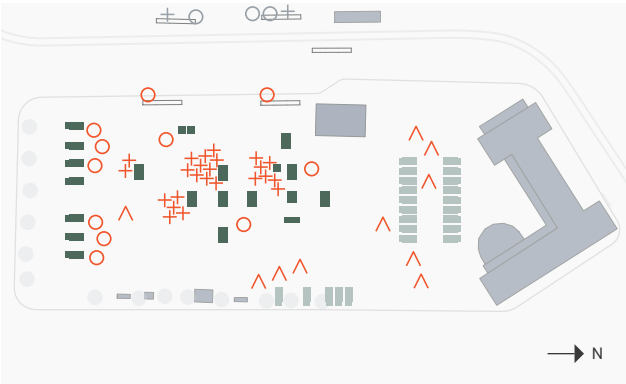
Unfortunately, this sort of weekly exception in the liveliness of the square took an early end, as when by the mid-afternoon all tents were packed, seagulls performed waste-spotting rounds, and finally, the cleaning trucks with high pressure jet arrived. By five o’clock in the afternoon, the esplanade returned to its usual desert state and was only used as a mobility junction carrying commuters, walkers and bikers. When suddenly deserted after a hectic afternoon and somehow silent of human voices, it feels as if life is not even allowed on the square.

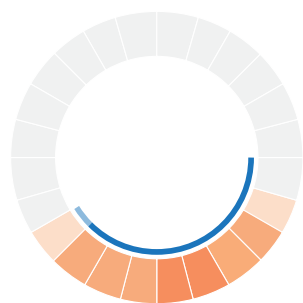
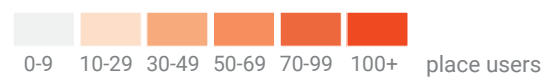
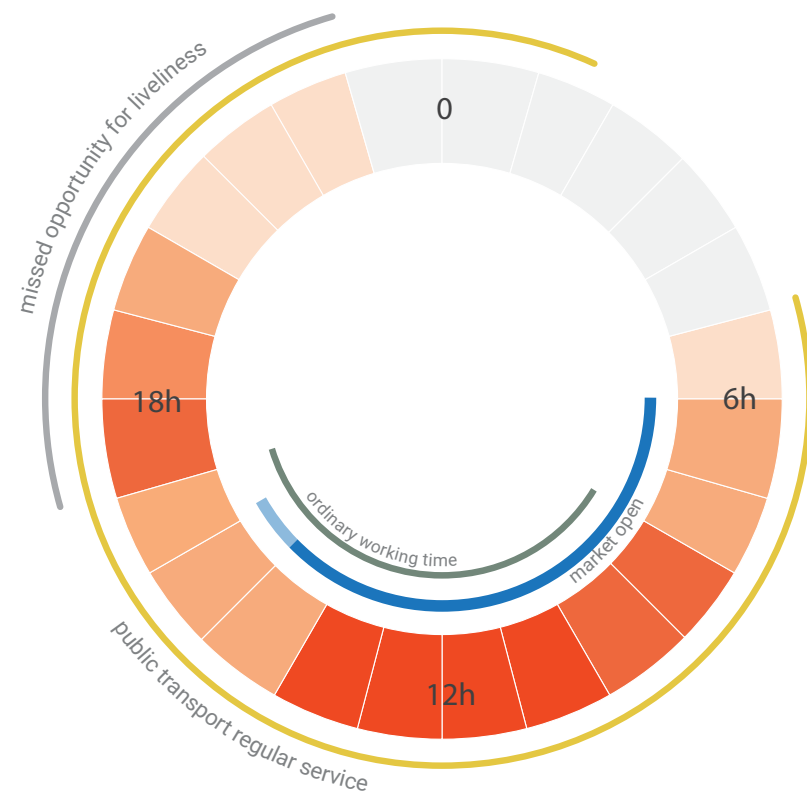
6.1.2 A story of emptiness

The substantial decrease of users endured by the square, as all commercial activity ceases, is clearly illustrated on the graphics of occupancy surveys. Mainly subsisting as a place of transit, pictured by the majority of people by the bus and tram stops, Hakaniemen Tori attracts then only few walkers who dare crossing the arid plain. Like observed on the graphics, the centre of the square remains mostly vacated and used only as a fast crossing path. The main employed arteries are located where the principal pedestrian gateways connect the square with the roads. There-upon it can be stated that the square offers a bad link to its surroundings and is therefore divided into two major poles; the edges and the centre. When looking at an entire day, the majority of the occupancy happens on the circumference line and the majority of Seated is at the bus stops. Unfortunately, these seated users are not part of the Enjoyers and so solely participate passively, or to a limited extend, to the life of the square.

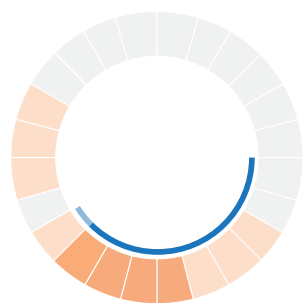
The walking users are composed of the Travellers, the Walkers and sometimes the Opportunists although in several areas of the square the Walkers get severely rare. The lack of space Enjoyers is made apparent when no commercial activities take place on the esplanade. Consequently, the assessment can be made that Hakaniemi Square is in itself not inviting or not experienced as pleasant. Also as many people are seated during the market opening time, it can be observed that this function is proscribed at different hours.

Right-hand side: Occupancy count diagrams
one symbol = two persons

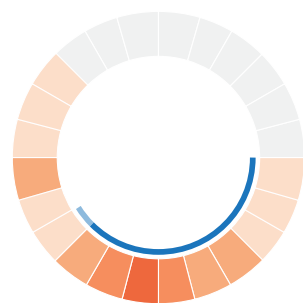




SEATED USER
= STAYING USER,
THE ENJOYER



STANDING USER
= LIMITED TIME USER,
EITHER THE ENJOYER OR
THE OPPORTUNIST

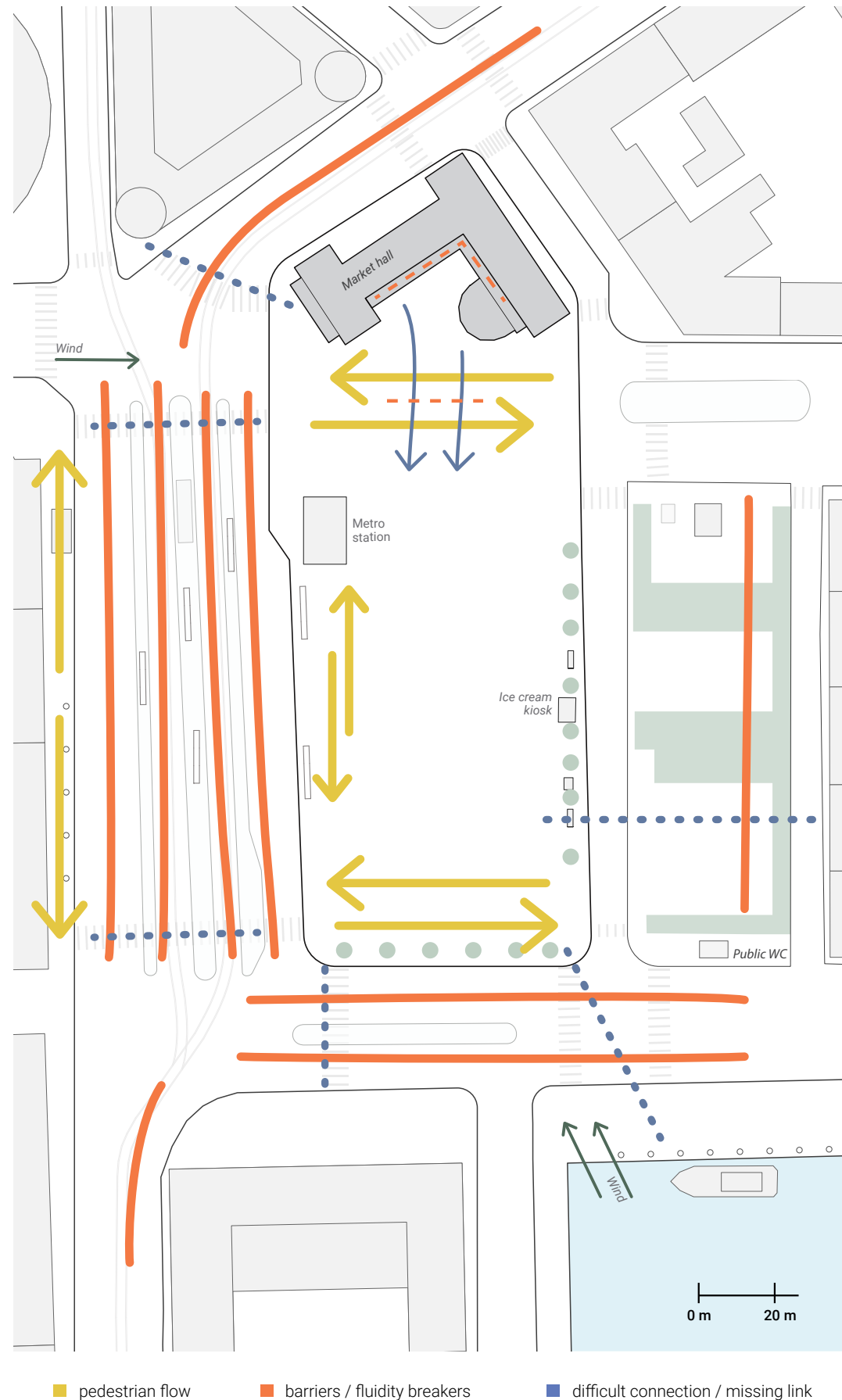


WALKING USER
= PASSING USER, THE
WALKER OR THE TRAVELLER



Diagram of use and occupancy rate of Hakaniemi Square during the day based on the users' count data collection

Above: Concentration of the circulation flow on the edges of the square
Layers of metal on irregular stone



Spatial analysis of Hakaniemi Square



By the examination of the floor plan, an impressive austerity is noted. Also when stepping on the empty square and looking around, the sobriety of the materials, the lack of details and available facilities build a characteristic experience of a truly neglected place. The back façade of the market hall houses delivery trucks and crates, further in front is a four-rows parking lot. Dispersed trees compose a thin barrier on the eastern side of the square. Few others are sparsely located on the south edge, but they are hard to notice as the circulating cars and the big dark grey building on the other side of the road feel more apparent. Furthermore, on the same side there is the stretch of the sea to be seen and it creates an appealing light show by twilight on the charming opposite shore. The traffic sound is very present and a steady wind sweeps constantly over through the square. The uneven cobblestones create an unpleasant paving and become rather perilous at icy times.

When asking the six interviewees on their general assessment on public places, they all agreed on the utmost importance of finding welcoming and qualitative public places in a city. Further, they all rated the public spaces of Helsinki as good or even very good with only one participant denoting a downside during winter time. With regard to the specific evaluation of the quality of the outdoor public place of Hakaniemi Square the respondents differed. On the side of the space avoiders all give a minimal score arguing the square doesn't feel nice. According to the market enjoyers the front was not unified as the most regular client

states it to be very good, another one says it is okay, the younger disagrees with both. The older market enjoyers qualify the atmosphere of Hakaniemi Tori as excellent: "Maybe I am old enough to say so." one of them said. In contrary, on the younger generation's side (including every group) the scores do not even reach the average.

Resulting is then two clear segregated groups. On one side are the market clients, namely the space enjoyers who affiliate with it and know it for a longer time. On the other side are the avoiders who disregard and even reject the square mainly based on ignorance. These protagonists are not very familiar with the square and know it only for a few years. This can lead to the hypothesis that Hakaniemi Square has a strong symbolic connotation linked with the local culture and provides predominantly a facilitated insideness (Relph, 1976) to the people fully immersed in the Finnish culture. The assumption can therefore be made that the physicality of the space doesn't suffice for itself. Further, an additional presumption can also be formed that since the dissatisfied space evaluators are constituted mostly of foreigners and entirely of the younger generation, it is a sign of change of paradigm. Younger individuals might travel more, gain more points of comparison, get more informed and knowledgeable, and so finally their expectations might evolve and grow. Ultimately one thing is common to all; no one sees any interest in setting foot on the square aside from the market hours.

Supporting the contrasted appraisal of the square, the linear drawings traced by the participants reveal two different circulation patterns. The square's ally hops with pleasure around the whole surface on market days, mostly during the week-end and for about an hour in the summertime. The antagonist on the other side seems to know Hakaniemi Square mostly from its edges and with a commuter's perspective. Indeed these users stay between zero to ten minutes. Occasionally, the Travellers cross the square diagonally, but do it even less when the centre is emptied from any activity so any interest. "When I cross the square by bike, I don't really know where to go nor what to do because of the lack of zoning or spatial landmarks." This testimony confesses a certain discomfort with being in the centre of the deserted square. This corroborates with the theory of necessary edges in an open space for the protection from potential predators and safety feeling (Gehl, 2010). Following his reasoning on relics of the congenital survival instinct, the authors wants to demonstrate the necessary implementation of the human scale in large spaces for the people's well-being. Thus the theory articulated by the diverse authors on the prejudice occasioned to the urban vitality by empty places receives here a renewed endorsement.

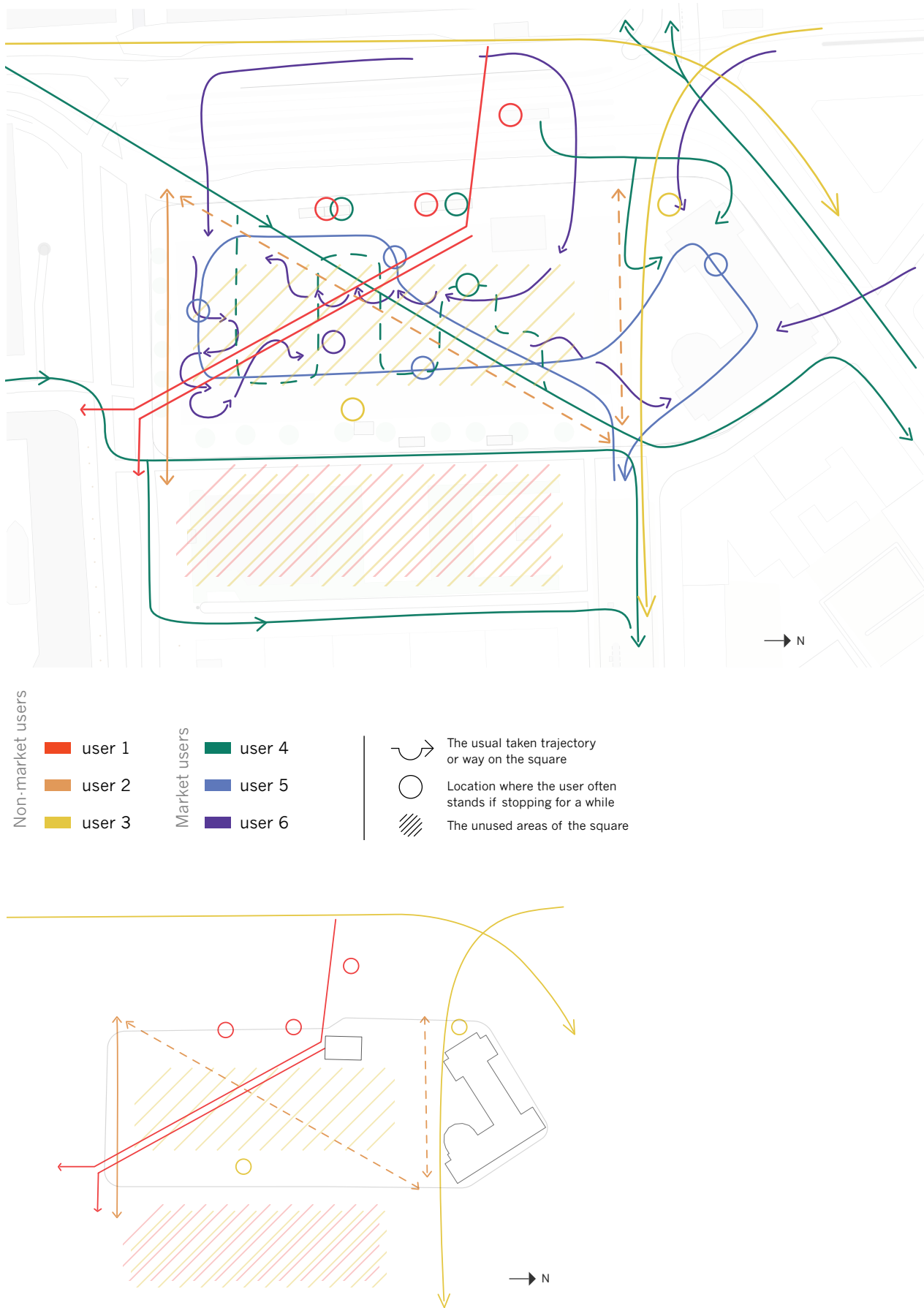
one factor. Accordingly, diverse sources were intentionally consulted and each account taken into consideration. A perception is subjective and personal and the goal is somehow set to create a spatial feeling that is susceptible to please the greatest amount of different people.

At this stage the general statement on the square is outspoken ; Hakaniemi Tori is under-used. Indeed in the prospect of a round-the-clock and all-year-round use, the esplanade, like many other ones, scores poorly. The research and observations executed so far bring us inevitably to the main research question of this paper : What input could change the dynamic of an under-used space? Brought up by the interviews, the individuals appreciating the square tend to visit it frequently, while the detractors ignore it completely. Implicitly, the discussion raised the topic of the quality of the space experience as a plausible causal effect to the occupancy rate of it. Namely, will a space hold more people if it is experienced more positively? Or will there be more people simply because there are perceivable invitations to use the square at the first place? The begin of an answer was provided in the literature review which showcased the interdependency and inter-influence of three fundamental elements: the materiality, the practice and the meaning (Cresswell, 2009). Hence the concern will be to frame tangible and intangible elements that might improve the perception of the square and increase its use in general.

6.1.3 The concoction of square

The antecedent accounts were made based on personal spatial sensation and others' space experience alongside with ethnographic notes. The spatial sensation can be described as the experience, the taste of the street. Besides the light, the smell or the sounds, the motion, the movements performed by the people in a place, can also create an impression. As dancers on a stage, people generate the visible rhythm, the perceivable tact in a space. The atmosphere is built from all the elements being part of a living partition, resonating with the identity of the place. A space is then multi-sided and it is therefore important to consider the general experience of a square as an all-encompassing concept but also a complex figure that can't be solved by only

But first, what Hakaniemi Square is lacking of in juxtaposition with the interview outcomes and the diverse personas' needs can be listed. Primarily, the esplanade is missing any permanent structure or facility that allows any sort of use. Accessible benches for example are necessary for people to linger, but also to spontaneously re-arrange heavy bags, or get a short break in the middle of a tiring walk as when the bones are aging. Available fixtures could transmit a message of inclusivity and thus attract more diverse users. Further, they would create additional edges and so convey an unconscious safety feeling. Secondly, and in relation to the first statement



Interviewees' circulation combined diagram and Travellers' graph

on the physicality of the square, the space needs clear and inviting functions at diverse time and seasonal frames for a repeated use.

Thirdly, on a spatial level, the absence of zones defining the square is mentioned many times. The planning of areas for specific active and passive uses might allow the users to situate themselves in the square. Further a multiplication of engaging crossing paths would increase the opportunities to use the square.

Fourthly, attention should be put on the surfaces and materiality in order to favour an effortless and pleasant experience.

Lastly, the square is short of free room for newly created and always evolving significance. As the preservation of the genuine and local identity of the square is necessary, it is however important to keep its meaning aligned with the current times. “The place has a strong historical weight, but lacks of political, cultural or casual significance.”, one interviewee declared claiming for a relaxed setting and a low threshold for people to make things happen (such as small performances or simply friends gatherings).

In connivance with the selection of personas on a base of similar behavioural patterns, the Enjoyers, the Opportunists, but also the Walkers need complements in order to perform in the space. As the Enjoyers are the ones who participate the most actively in the life of the space, the Walkers and Opportunists might become more enduring and more involved users if they find any reason to stay. Further, the Travellers’ count will believably benefit from a more defined, designed and lively place. Moreover they might one day want to become space Enjoyers too.

In the aftermath of the interviews, it appears that the most important elements for a pleasant square, apart from the seating facilities, are the commercial offering like cafés on top, followed by the people and the accessibility. The scenery or view put together with the sunlight attract also most of the votes. In a sum, a good space needs to be practically, aesthetically and beneficially pleasant, at every time.

Here are in echo some reflexive accounts on the square from the interviewees:

“ I wish there would be permanent lively places to grab a coffee and meet friends.”

Nathalia 32, Brazil

« It is just an empty space that you punctually fill with things. Interactivity is missing »

Eero 34, Finland

“Squares should not be given for parking use. We should be tearing down the surrounding ugly buildings and replace them with interesting ones.”

Riita 75, Finland

So far it can be stated that Hakaniemi Square does not fulfil the various injunctions for a pleasant space. Due to the multifarious character of the suggestions and the needs, any start of a change feels like stepping forward blindfolded. Because of this reason, the research will be pursued in an intuitive way which leads to two different experimentations in space.



6.2 Intervention One

6.2.1 Context

The first intervention on the square was directed to the materiality of the urban environment. Aim was to propose to the passers-by of Hakaniemi Square seating surfaces and thus offer them features to remain for a while in the square. The goal was to observe changes in behaviour of the users in relationship to the physical environment of the specific location. The objective of research was to answer whether the addition of seating facilities would attract and retain more users in the space.

In order to measure the levels of use and record spatial and social behaviours, a mix of methods were privileged. A small camera filming in time-lapse mode was placed on a recessed metallic storage, which offered an extensive view on the installation. Additionally, pictures were taken from diverse familiar devices and a users' count tracking holding personas was accompanied with concise field notes and placement sketches.

A bright sunny day was chosen for the first experiment in the space. The sky was clear, the wind shy, and the temperatures pleasant for a Finnish summer. In order to take advantage of the last customers of the market and hopefully raise the interest of the few the installation begun in the last moments of the market at the twilight zone of the commercial activities, when many tents were already gone and the last were slowly packed up. Three bench structures made out of stacked timber beams held together with lashing straps were then set up directly on the square. Around them

few Ikea stools were also placed. The point was to keep neutral aesthetics to the believed taste of the local culture with the wood prevalence and the simple and humble look. The combination of the three benches of diverse dimensions and the easily movable stools was designed to offer multiplicity of choice and flexibility of use.

6.2.2 Public... to some extend

At the arrival on the square the reactions of the users and of the vendors were diverse and speaking. Some strollers reservedly showed interest and observe the assembling at distance. A quick van-parking adjustment was energetically required by a café tent worker, as she needed free-way to put their van for the night. Two friendly vendors on the leave stopped to our height showing curiosity and complementing the halfway mounted structures. "They look good!" were they shouting from the window of the vehicle with their thumbs up and a bright smile. But then on a second instance the less inflamed and delighted reactions to the agitation around the pine beams arrived.

Two workers of Helsinki City in charge of the market square's safety and respect of regulations approached the installation work after lingering. Asking for permission papers the two men in green neon shirts initiated a long discussion investigating the purpose of the installation and kindly demanding us to leave. Allegedly the intervention found itself in a troubled blurry

Esplanades

zone to them, it seemed it was not allowed to bring anything onto the square without a formal authorization. At a certain point a vendor followed by the hierarchical superior of the two mediators made a rather discontent and brief interruption in the verbal transaction, vigorously demanding us to pay for staying on the square as they all the sellers had to do as well. Consequently a long negotiation process started with the two young men, where was stated that no financial profit was made out of the installation, that its stay was short-lived, its purpose was academic, its presence was not peace disturbing, and further that a public space was for the people. The major unclear decisional area concerned the size of what was allowed to be brought onto the public place, as bringing a personal chair seemed alright but a 1.8 meters wide seating surface wasn't. This raised pertinent questions about the ownership and the definition of "public" place. Indeed in real life, a "public place" comes along with different rules prescribed by superior entities, that control more or less rigidly the activities. How to interpret the term "public" when the people are not allowed to do and be? The two mediators weren't sure what to respond to the topic and what was to be their exact role in the machinery. By the time the experiment received the official permission of the "guards", all the market tents were gone, only two flower trucks remained.

6.2.3 Profitability

After a somewhat hectic prologue to the spatial intervention the wooden seating surfaces were then ready to be put at entire disposal to the users of the square and serve for data collection. Two ice-cream kiosks were still in business and few strollers were on the square. While the one kiosk offering no terrace facility was fairly aligned with the experiment installation, spontaneous users did not hesitate long before taking the opportunity to sit down and savour their sweet delicacy. Building the first major customer mass of the experimentation the ice-cream eaters generally spent a limited amount of time on the benches and stools and then left right after consumption.

A couple would briefly exchanged words between two mouthfuls and look around and watch the jaywalkers passing by. Two active-looking women, one of which was pushing a pram with a lively and playful young child, sat down on the long bench for quite a while. Both of them were eating an ice-cream and were engaged in a friendly and animated discussion. Other bench and stool users came and went. Not being attentive to their surrounding the two women were absorbed by their discussion seeming to enjoy the sun, while freely changing seating positions on the hard pine surface.

Experiencing a slight drop of users at the closing time of the last retailers the square and the seats remained deserted for a while and appeared somehow useless. But Hakaniemi Tori was filled with sunshine and the temperatures were ideal. Hence during the remaining several hours of sun exposure few passers-by would demonstrate curiosity and interest for the use of those seats. One lady paused for about ten minutes to eat her sandwich turning her face to the sun and looking at the come and go of people and cars from time to time. Right after she had left a young biker drove along the benches didn't take long before using the suddenly appeared facility fully to his advantage. Unpacking his computer, sitting astride, the young male soon removed his black T-shirt and exposed his muscular torso to the sun rays. With headphones on his ears the relaxed exhibitionist seemed to use the space as his own outdoor living-room. A young woman wearing a black jacket and sunglasses placed herself some time later on a small bench at the back right. At honourable distance of the manful juvenile the lady was mostly staring at her phone or at the square around. Sitting upright she seemed to wait for someone and did only grant the comfortable seated with a few disinterested looks and when the latter moved. Suddenly departing the woman left the beach boy alone, who remained seated for some more long minutes, in total almost for an hour.

Another type of space enjoyers arrived later on, two couples of male friends who freely enjoyed the installation at different times. Drinking beers



15h49 / watcher & talkative seated + observer



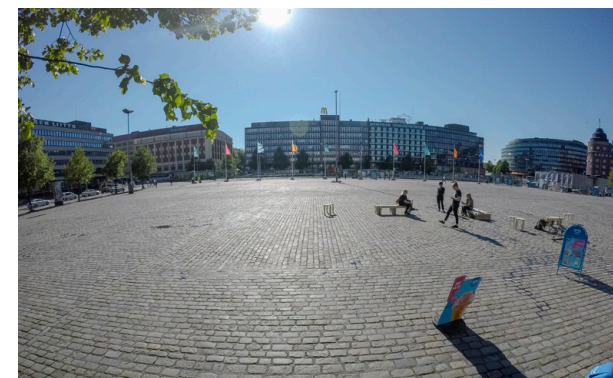
15h54 / talkative seated



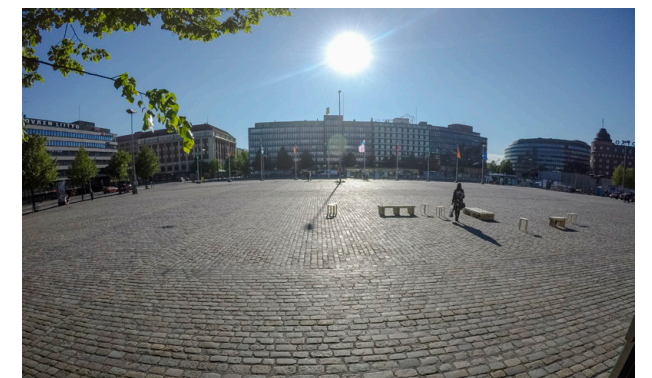
16h07 / talkative seated + watcher seated



16h16 / cleaning trucks + observer



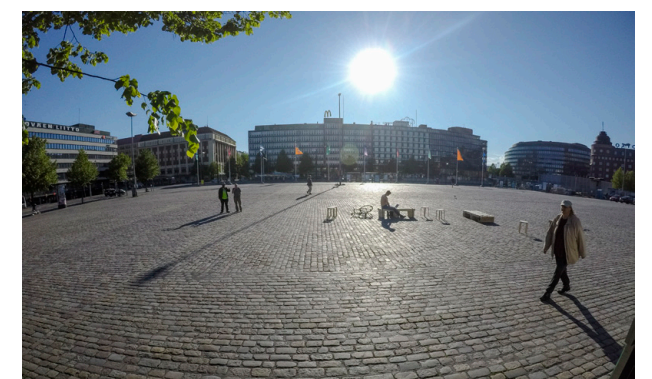
16h34 / relaxing & talkative seated, visitors



17h44 / traveller going through the installation



18h06 / travellers + one boy seated



18h10 / long-term enjoyer boy seated + travellers & market brigade



out of cans and conversing their enterprise looked like a casual and relaxed time spent with friends at the end of the day. Looking sparsely around these users would be the ones handling the available seats with most freedom and in a flexible way. In fact, taking pictures in a top-down view from his friend sited on a stool a young man dressed in black shorts and a black t shirt stepped onto the small bench. He then tried to stack a stool onto the bench supposedly in order to gain more height, but unfortunately the two experimenters realized that their installation was too wobbly and went back to their first seating position. The other pair of friends who arrived by bike grabbed each a stool and disposed it in front of their lying vehicles in such a manner to sit next to each other facing the sun. With the benches and stools at disposal, flexible and free of use, people would come to enjoy the space for what it was : spacious and with a good sun exposure. It appears that the seating addition in the square encouraged spontaneous visits and occupancy of the place.

6.2.4 Placement, dynamics and interactions

Not many users presented themselves anymore as the sun set down and not many passers-by were to be spotted either. During the daylight however a respectable amount of jaywalkers, bikers, and people wandering around were present at a close perimeter to the benches. Sometimes up to twenty-five people a minute but usually an average of fifteen the square welcomed many different users with very diverse goals. Some would pass by at a fast pace and offer a quick blink onto the installation, others in groups would amble talking and cast a careless glance. On the contrary, few people adopted the behaviour of a scout, walking about the edges of the square, meticulously inspecting the surroundings, and carefully observing the wooden structures without however sitting down on it.

On the side of the seated users, who reached a maximum count of seven while the ice-cream

kiosk was on duty, diverse malleable users categories emerged. Indeed, during their resting time the subjects easily went from one to another as their behaviour evolved. The majority of them obviously belonged to the group of the watchers as even if busy talking, eating or reading, almost all of them raised from time to time the eyes to observe their fellows. Very few sat down on the sole purpose to carry out a focus requiring occupation. Even the young exhibitionist, who was much concentrated on his own business, transferred from time to time into the category of the watchers. In fact, as an endorsement to Whyte and Gehl's theory the experiment subjects appeared to like observing other people and the seats offered the perfect setting for it.

Other categories of seated users were the following ones; the relaxing seated, the busy seated, and the talkative seated. The category of the “relaxing seated” expressed the users who came on the benches to mostly perform a leisure and passive activity like reading, meditating, or taking a nap. Taking full advantage of the seating these users were the ones enjoying the place to its maximum. Not many people belonged to that category as the few single persons present did not openly appear to grant themselves with some relaxing time exclusively, but rather to perform another occupational pretext like meeting a friend or using their smartphone. Two were on the count however, for example a young woman was observed sitting for a long time on the big platform and then laying down on her back so to enjoy the sun. The small number of relaxing seated people can possibly be inherent to the fact that the benches were part of a punctual and spontaneous action. Indeed, true leisure seekers didn't know in advance Hakaniemi Square would offer such a suitable frame.

In the category of the busy seated were also to be found all the users performing in a focused way a single activity with a straight and precise aim, like eating, making a phone call, tie shoelaces. The busy seated users formed the second busiest group after the watchers, a great amount of them eating ice-cream, the other half scrolling down their phone putting on a serious face.

Seated users positioned with defined distance and specific orientation

Esplanades

These users had different levels of openness to what is happening around them and usually leave the place as soon as their activity had come to an end. As for the talkative seated, they are represented by the group of people, who use the seats mainly as an opportunity to pursue their conversations. Spacious and flexible enough to welcome multiple people at once the installation built for them a suitable physical frame for socialization.

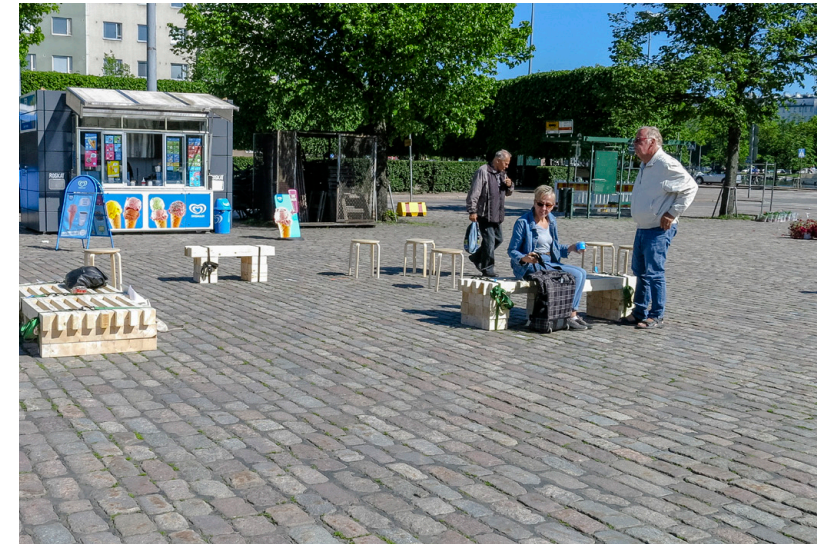
As the different users categories would grow, shrink, merge, and mix one behavioural constant emerged from the acting of the people, namely the thoughtful territorial placement. Indeed, people would react to the presence of others and deliberately seek for a balance between closeness and distance. Disposed in a manner that would leave free room for seating choice the benches were purposely spaced at comfortable distance to each other. At some point suspecting to discourage new opportunists I confined myself to a more isolated stool making sure the area was be perceived as free and remained thoroughly accessible in the mind of the people. As a matter of fact when people used the seats simultaneously it was observed that they would place themselves so to avoid direct eye contact with the other occupants. Mainly choosing a position that made them face the sun the seated users faced in most of the cases the bigger part of the square, as there was not much going on at their back. Couples conversing favoured to sit like at the corner of a table, next to each other but not strictly facing the same direction. Consequently, the flexibility of use offered by the stools and benches revealed itself useful in that matter supported by the discernible travel of stools around the intervention zone.

On the other hand, when the installation remained unused people would not hesitate to walk or bike through it, a phenomenon that didn't happen when the occupants were there.

On behalf of the social interactions a substantial increase has been observed. Beyond the subtle degree of numerous gazes directed to the curious appearance and its enjoyers more intense interactions took place.

In the most early phase of the experiment a cleanly shaven man rapidly showed up at the long bench and within seconds put his backpack down onto the floor, extracted a can of beer out of it, and took a long sip. Pretty talkative the skinny man wearing grey sunglasses wanted to start small talk with me and a friend sitting on the biggest bench. Mentioning his depressive state, the man suddenly got up to address some more questions to his newly found discussion partners before promptly sitting back and admiring the wooden stack. Slapping three times at the side of the bench and tilting appreciatively his head he declared: "Good Finnish engineering!". When his two younger friends in wide black jumpers joined him he wished us to enjoy "their" benches (meaning of the Finnish nation) before disappearing. Later another eccentric character with grey skin reached the perimeter on his bike. Just passing by he threw in: "When is the jam starting?!". A wide smile on his face, his eyes concealed behind dark sunglasses, he was already on the way.

Such encounters would probably not have happened on the vast square without the creation of a converging centre. Neither when the two male friends conversing by the last minutes of sunshine came towards us asking for "jazz cigarettes". The fact that different people would remain on a same spot at the same time guarantees a considerable raise of direct social contacts. As a matter of fact one could construct the reasoning that by standing still, people open up more to their environment and make themselves somehow more vulnerable, or alternatively available to the approach of others.



6.3 Intervention Two



6.3.1 Context

On a very pleasant Wednesday at the beginning of June the second intervention was carried out. The sun was shining high in the sky and a light wind was refreshed the skin warmed up by the summery temperatures sporadically. Few hours before the intervention the market square was sparkling life and the usual coffee tents were hosting many clients at the seek of a welcome and merited sunbath. The day was one of the first ones that really felt like summer and the moods were joyful.

The intervention focusing on the practices had been designed for friends to spend some pleasant time on the square and give the opportunity for everyone else to join in. The call had been given to some of my comrades to join an organized picnic from 17h30 on. Quiches and soft beverages would be provided, all they should bring was a blanket, some more food to share and a good spirit. On the square not far from the first deployed blankets a wooden crate providing some more blankets was installed for whoever might feel to spontaneously join in. Like a subtle invitation a helium red balloon had been tied to the box. The presence of any written indication had been deliberately ousted. Indeed any pushy invitation or injunction were avoided, as the interventions were meant to be inscribed in the routines, the daily life and their observation away from punctual events and pop up gatherings. The goal was to place a very common practice of the local culture in a place that seemed never having

been used for this purpose before. And at that point one could say that this prospect already said a lot about the square.

Based on Cresswell writing, materiality, meaning, and practices are nourishing each other. The practices are a crucial component of a place and have a strong impact on its meaning that users attribute to. When repeated the practices indeed build and increase the meaning of the place they are located in (Cresswell, 2009). People relate to a space according to the activities they perform in it, and they perform activities in relation to the meaning they give to it. Different feelings and types of relations to a space mix across generations and groups; they construct the multifaceted reality of a place's perception unique to everyone, often bearing common meanings to bigger groups. In our case study Hakaniemi square represents to many the weekend morning spot for breakfasts and short strolls across the market for people advanced in years and young families. It still carries a rather strong political meaning, although not many protests or union revolts are carried out on it anymore. This is the main picture conferred to the square when asked around. What is seizing, is that the square is by its definition practically underused and seems addressed only to a limited population. What if new practices on the square came into being and if all sorts of users conquered the space to perform different things at different hours of the day? The postulate for this second experiment was to produce an inspiration for different spatial behaviour by the introduction of a "new" practice.

Pictures and short sequences of films were taken in an attempt to record possible modifications of behaviour by the square’s visitors and triggered social interactions. Field notes and visitors count tracking completed the data collection. Furthermore, following the theory that an adjustment of practices can change the way participants relate to the space, accounts on perception, and potential evolution of perspective were gathered via a brief interview paper. Later engaging the participants in an informal discussion, richer accounts, and more general evaluation of Hakaniemi square were exchanged.

6.3.2 Observations

The participants were installed, conversing lightly with a drink in their hands, a soft breeze made itself more present and at the edge of the sea, it transformed into a proper marine wind. Nevertheless, food was enjoyed and the atmosphere was friendly. The noise of the adjacent traffic was amply perceptible, so was the screeching male voice on the microphone from the nearby event. Indeed, during the first part of the picnic an unanticipated mass event was simultaneously conducted. Three sizable tourist buses were parked at the other end of the square at the entrance of the metro, a long queue formed in front them almost the size of the square’s width. Manifestly participating in a sauna contest people were waiting for their turn in a disciplined and patient way. The regular square’s users seemed to grant it a more limited interest as it seemed predominantly by the reactions towards the present experimentation.

Many decided walkers avoided any visual contact busily crossing the square, often heads down to their phones or headphones nailed to their ears. The amount of people in the most immediate perimeter rarely rose above ten individuals listed on the dot every ten minutes for one hour and half. Among the walkers and the bikers less than half looked with interest at the performed practice and even less observed it in an insisting manner. The persona’s type described as “detectives” was rarely on the count of more than one at a time but

was however constantly present. The detectives is a category of people who derives from their straight path to walk up closer to the group sitting on the floor and so being able to see what was going on. Yet not a single person came very close nor asked any questions. The closest act to an inquisition was executed by a particularly curious and very friendly Labrador. In the category of the “watchers” were assigned all the people who showed interest to the picnic setting, turning multiple times their head to look over their shoulder, or the ones who stared during a longer time span. Some ardent watchers were people in groups of two or more individuals and mostly seeming to adhere to a similar lifestyle than the one of the participants. Young adults aware of their clothing style, yet with a controlled touch of neglect, in apparent research of pleasant leisure time, all part of a same social group, members of a common herd inspecting each other. Other unaccompanied watchers smiled at the scene and to its actors, carrying on with their journey. Hardly any flâneurs were spotted and these ones rather focused their attention on the sauna competition taking pictures and listening to the thunderous speaker’s voice. Incidentally, the organized event didn’t appear to present any particular advantage in increasing the amount of visitors in the close periphery of the experiment.

On the subject of the social interactions diverse subtle contacts between the picnic group and the bystanders were noticed. Sitting on the warm cobble stones the voluntary subjects frequently observed at diverse attention levels the flow of people walking around. Eye contacts as the most frequent manifestation, few smiles were also exchanged. Furthermore, the recorded acts of coming closer, getting around, and distancing are testimony of a change in behaviour in relationship to other space occupants. Indeed, naturally occurring acknowledgment of others and reciprocal behavioural response is the basement to synergy and silent intercommunication in society. Consequently, the presence of picnickers undoubtedly resulted in a raise of social interactions in that more people are to be found on the same spot at the same time. Besides, as a part of the users remained still it can be assumed that the prob-



Punctual record of behaviours in immediate surrounding taken every ten minutes

ability of eye contacts raised and behavioural adjustment became more perceptible.

However, the sole inclusion and realization of an unexpected practice didn’t seem much effective in substantially raising the social interactions. Their materialization is possibly refrained by multiple factors such as the culture, the social edicts, or simply the lack of adapted and enough inviting space. Certainly, the Finnish culture is accounted for not leaving much space for extrovert behaviour and random proximity seeking. Spontaneous encounters and conversations with strangers are a rather rare phenomenon and generally left to

the marginal, the unfitting layer of the society. As a by-product to the experiment a group of four strollers with a neglected appearance and a worn out allure seemed possibly inspired by the picnic for a while. Seated with their back to the scaffolds of the metro entrance, beers in their hands, they unfortunately left after a very short while apparently unconvinced of their newly found spot. Probably too exposed and agitated the square’s corner (atmosphere) eventually managed to make them escape. These four individuals were the only palpable sign of a possible mimicry for the reason that outside of this little event no single person spontaneously joined the practice or expressed

the will to also sit on the ground and passively enjoy the square. As no inspiration wave hit the bystanders one can formulate the hypothesis that the reason lies in the certain unwelcoming character of Hakaniemi Square.

6.3.3 Perceptions

Among the participants of this second intervention most of them do use the square only to commute with public transportation. The majority declares coming on the square an average of twice a month and spend not more than ten minutes there. When asked how they would rate the spatial physicality of Hakaniemi Square, two of seven respondents gave it a good grade while the others depreciated it quite severely because of its emptiness. All agreed on the poor quality of atmosphere of the square while stating its potentiality because of its location, sun exposure, and available space. However, the dimension of the square was often mentioned as a main obstacle in creating a welcoming urban place. Along the discussion it was mentioned that the square wasn't very pedestrian friendly due to its substantial proportions and lack of landmarks. Indeed the participants declared to feel lost and somehow vulnerable walking in the middle of the square. Additionally, the floor surface was designated as unwelcoming for seated persons and walkers with reduced mobility. The square was generally judged as uncomfortable. When appreciating the aesthetical properties of Hakaniemi Square the rating does not reach the average level. People mentioned that due to its empty character there was not much to evaluate, to deliberate on.

On the regard of practices half of the participants expressed their satisfaction concerning the time spent on Hakaniemi Square within the frame of the experiment. Indeed, the presence of friends, the act of sharing food, and the conjointly pleasant time spent in the sun seems to constitute the main positive triggers. Others still depreciated the atmosphere on behalf of the strong wind, the traffic noise, and the absence of seating facilities. Thus for these people it seemed that the performed activity didn't justify an improvement

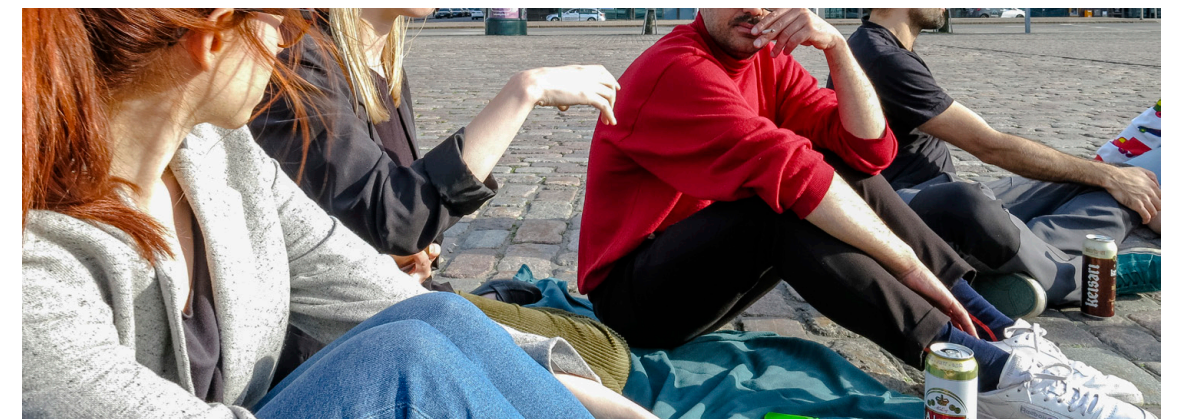
of atmosphere as the place was felt too restless and noisy.

Finally, the grand majority declared not necessarily to be willing to come back onto the square in the future as they didn't see any reason why to do so. The lack of interest was justified through the absence of activities and people. However, a subtle change of perception on the square was noted amongst two participants. A raised concern and curiosity for Hakaniemi Square emerged leading two people to express the wish to come back more often, mostly during market hours.

Considering the diverse statements expressed through the participants' interviews and following discussions few points and hypothesis can be made on the square. To be considered is, that the sample of respondents is rather homogeneous and composed of educated to Master level creatives between the age of 25-35 years. Parity in the nationality was reached as half of them were Finns. The other participants originated from diverse countries of Europe and America.

The first realization is that the square doesn't seem to be much popular among the young adult generation and fails to attract them even during high time of activity. It can be supposed that the market including its opening hours and offering does not fit their lifestyle. A further hypothesis can be made that the square with its frugal program fails to provide means of identity expression to the younger generation. Indeed, through the preliminary field observations, the limited generation range of customers had been already noticed. However, Hakaniemi Square is perceived as having potential by the subjects in general. All what seemed to be expected from it is to offer more opportunities and invitations to use it at diverse times of the day and in various manners.

One interesting observation is that the people not knowing the history of the square and its related past narrative do not seem to bond with it nor experience any enticement to it. On the opposite side the Finnish subjects which are aware of the legendary nature of the esplanade show more interest towards it. Thereupon can be stated that the square faces difficulties in attracting diverse



users types. It is as if Hakaniemen Tori because of its vast emptiness had it hard to convey any message to the newbies. Beyond the hardly palpable historical identity the laboriousness seems rather to reside in the deficiency of the spatial program. Indeed, as the square's activities offering is limited, so are the practices. Consequently, the creation of any additional layers of identity and meaning is restricted in turn forming the origin of the occupancy shortfall. With a certain loss of identity by a part of the population Hakaniemi Square landed halfway in the difficile category of the meaningless places.

Lastly, if the addition of practices on an empty square helps to modify the way people relate with the space and the possibilities it could offer it can however once again be concluded that this is not enough. Possibly bringing an increase in consciousness and interest towards the place practices need however to be repeated in order to have a valuable impact on the perception. Hence practices are more easily encouraged through appliances and facilities. Furthermore function supported by materiality could be suggested and in the case of sizable squares, a right amount on material support should be put at disposal in order to provide the frame for activities.

6.4 Gained and grown knowledge

6.4.1 Research limitations

The following displayed findings have been collected and drawn out during the process of the conducted qualitative research. As its name indicates, a qualitative research does not hold the qualifications of a scientific or quantitative research and therefore presents several limitations concerning its objectivity. However, a qualitative research encompasses many research methods and therefore builds a rich source of information and provides a good irrigation flow on hypothesis leading to various possible solution paths.

On the behalf of field trips and experimentations, the results were indubitably influenced by independent resorts such as temperatures, sun illumination, the time of the week, etc. Regarding the occupancy survey's records for example, the count has varied through the uncontrollable influential factors of the in-vivo setting. In an effort of transparency, the various times, days, and climatic variables have been clearly illustrated so in the graphics.

Further, the ethnographic accounts have surely been affected by my own personal and cultural biases with a perceptible hint of a desire for social rapprochement. Yet the approximate objectivity or established subjectivity of the ethnographic field is a known and assumed fact.

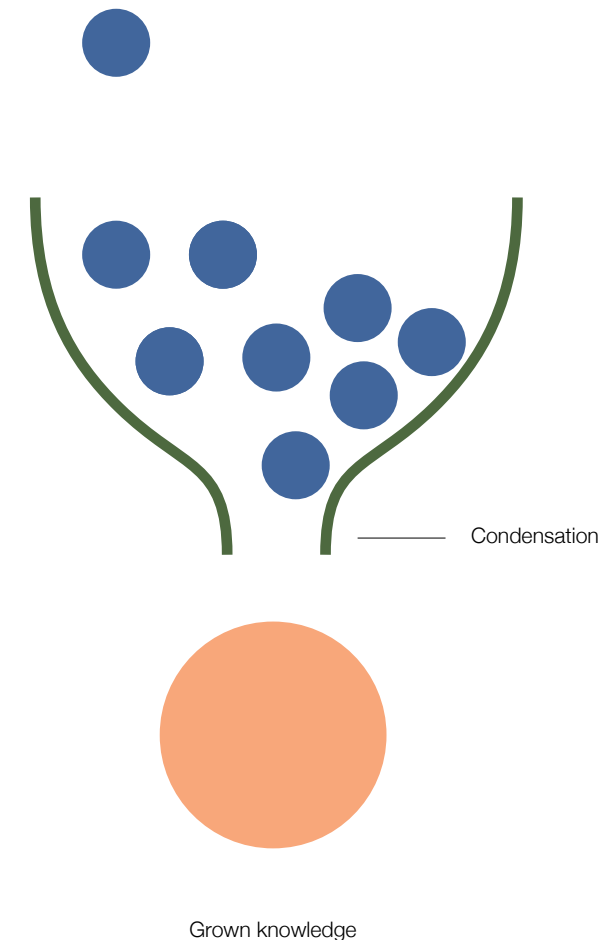
Seeking an in-depth understanding of the topic, the research stages setting-specific results. Thus it can be argued that the research suffers from a scope limitation, as it puts light mostly on

the relation between an existing square and the people on it. Indeed, big structural forces such as institutional powers and governmental measures or perhaps the social processes of exclusion and differentiation have been only mentioned briefly. The research deliberately took sides in the human scale, focussing essentially on the space user and his immediate relation to it. The reason for such an inclination is the original aim to report the attention on the present needs at the present time.

6.4.2 Overlapping functions and flexibility

A reasonable amount of valuable learning came out of the practical research triggered by the theoretical one. Thus it is grand time to make a little point and consider the acquired knowledge so far. The main question on the potential triggers for change of the dynamic of an under-used space grasps here the beginning of an answer.

What has been learnt firstly is the fundamentality of overlapping functions to encourage cross-time uses of the space, consequently in order to increase the occupancy and so life on a square. The term "overlapping functions" entails all the materiality and services that shape a square and influence behavioural patterns that happen at the same time. For example, the performed act of sitting while eating an ice-cream and observing the landscape and people walking around requires a certain amount of different functions provided to



the user. Indeed, probably a bench, an ice-cream kiosk, walking paths, and designed perspectives are at least needed for the action to be completed. It has been observed during the research and stated in the literature review that it is the mix of functions that attracts the most efficiently a great amount of diverse users throughout the day.

Such a statement is supported for example through the observations made during the implemented practice of the second experiment. As noted, the strollers and more decided walkers, if showing different degrees of interest to the gathering, did not judge fitted to replicate the behaviour. The act of having a picnic, a laid-back behaviour conceived as entirely normal in the local culture, didn't seem suitable to the context, in the regard of the participants and presumably of the other space users. In that way it can be advanced that the overall context of Hakaniemi Square is restraining. If an act is perceived as improper to a setting, it is because the setting itself is not supporting the act. Indeed Hakaniemi Square doesn't offer much opportunities to casually enjoy the square outside of official business hours. The result of the second intervention supports then the argument that the solely input of practices is not enough to enliven places. Instead functions should be considered as practices enablers and it is noteworthy to realise that functions are supported by the materiality.

Demonstrated otherwise, on market days or during the first intervention in space, when services or fixtures are available, a reinforced use of the space appears. In the particular case of the benches' experiment, what was noteworthy, is that the usually "timid" or withholding Finnish urban user did not hesitate a second before responding positively to the explicit invitation provided by the seating function. This leads us to the conclusion that, when functions are made available, people make contentedly usage of them. Thereupon, the way to change a somehow framing context is to implement a set of practices' enablers. Like an assortment of diverse open invitations, accessible functions offer a frame for free use with a minimum of constraints and a maximum of flexibility, thus attracting a

great amount of different users throughout time. Consequently a careful balance between material support and adaptability should be found.

Developing further on the term of flexibility observed during the first experiment is the enthusiasm with which the users were employing the flexible stools. Like a tribute Whyte, the individuals would irremediably but slightly change their placement, as if they wanted to make the settings theirs. In a sense, flexibility can be considered as a mean to shape according to will, thus bearing a feeling of ownership which increases the involvement of the subject on the object.

6.4.3 More than a drawing

Beyond a millimetre outline traced on a white page, we came to understand through the research that a place is more than a two-dimensional vector illustration emerged from the sole brain of a planner. A combination of senses, meanings, and actions build the reality of a space. By the reality is of course meant the user's reality, hence the perception and shared (or not) created knowledge in response of the experience of it (Crabtree 2012). That is the point: a place is an experience. An experience is consequently inherent to the subject's subjectivity.

What characterises the essence of experiences is the powerful impact they have on the life of people. Because of the hedonistic nature of humans, an experience needs to be pleasant in order to be reiterated. Every business man selling goods knows it; all that counts is experience. It is constituted of every conscious and unconscious elements that affect our feelings and carve accordingly our inscribed perceptions. In a sum, our understanding and sensibility are shaped by experiences.

By the contemplation of the ethnographic records is revealed the undeniable fact that the personal accounts collected throughout the days were influencing the private judgement on the square. Indeed, when there was nothing on the square, the latter was regarded as dull and useless,

whereas on a sunny market afternoon the esplanade was observed as pleasant and enjoyable. Thus an experience should not be considered as a steady element, but in contrary as a dynamic phenomenon.

Additionally, the negatively altered judgment had repercussions on the will to remain on the square and finished to generate an early departure. Consequently it can be stated that an experience based on diverse conscious and unconscious feeling indicators emanating from a place has an impact on actions.

Talking about unconscious elements of perception, it has been for example hard for the interviewees to determine what factors are influent in their decision of going and remaining outdoors during their free time. Potentially because many are difficult to pinpoint, as an individual is not always knowledgeable about the reasons that motivate his choices. Nonetheless, one should consider the human as a vertebrate who operates choices which are not based on a constant decisional force, but rather with making unpredictable quick decisions that will lead him to the most profitable situation.

If the pleasant weather takes a pole position in the motivation to stay outdoors, the selection between the different decisive elements was hard to make. With the enjoyment as a common denominator, significant factors were inherent to a person's age, cultural background, personality. In fact, the determinants are constitutional of a person's individuality.

Further in defining the elements building a

quality place, all participants were also hesitating between the diverse possibilities. Some respondents were very rational in their answers and turned themselves mostly towards the terms referring to fundamental functions, while others were very inclined to the atmospheric attributes connected with pleasurable situations. There are different levels of awareness of the influence a surrounding has on oneself and they are as various as the conscious sensibilities to a space.

As one interviewee stated: "The square doesn't feel nice." and subsequently "I never go.", it is then argued that the environment has an effect on the way a person feels and consequently tends to repeat an experience or not. Developing on this, it can be suggested that the experience of a place can affect at least temporarily the mood of a person. Supported by a multitude of studies and writings, including the ones of the selected literature, the available argumentation tends to demonstrate the durable impacts of the environment on the physical and psychic health of people.

Lastly, in the regard of all afore exposed statements, it can be suggested that cities are underestimated in their capacity of affecting the wellbeing of its dwellers. Consequently, recommendation is made to consider and finally believe that city planning is a powerful tool and good use should be made of it in order to achieve a great diversity of positive personal experiences.

6.4.4 Key elements for enliven spaces

(A prologue to the handbook)

If an equilibrium needs to be found between the diverse factors possibly inducing liveliness in public places, it seems wise to firstly display the planning and spatial elements revealed by the research that are capable of fostering social interactions. Extracted similarities, the key findings are listed below and form the first draft of a formula.

Through the addition of facilities inducing people to stay, a substantial increase in direct social contacts in the specific location has been noted. Lingerin

People go where people are. People stay when given the reason to do so.

People like sitting, people like meeting other people, people like enjoying the sun.

A good public square is a multi-dimensional setting where people feel eligible to perform practices. An accessible and inclusive frame is created through the supply of diverse functions.

Materiality supports functions.

Round-the-clock and cross-seasonal use are crucial terms for qualifying a lively square and therefore important notions to aim at when planning a public place.

Seating is good but not enough.

Individuals strike for pleasure, acquisitions, immediate reward, profit, subsistence. The exposed theatre of all human drives is the public place. As the bipeds associate for a more efficient satisfaction, pleasure is equally said to come from social contacts.

A good spatial experience needs to please the senses.

To recognize and respect the history but moreover to bring additional layers of identity to a square is beneficial for its inclusive character. Meaning is created through repeated practices and they happen when the people identify with the place.

A public place is an element part of a dynamic complex structure, a vortex where interconnected pieces influence each other. A subtle change can bring a substantial improvement.

The connection of a square to its surrounding matters.

Opportunities are key.

6.4.5 A welcome change and its possible

Made apparent along the practical research and supported by the interviews and ethnographies, Hakaniemi Square should be subjected to regeneration. Currently under-used and devaluated, it is argued that the square through its central position in the city but also in the life of many citizens has a strong potential to become a major contributor of the urban life to many more people.

Supported by the success of the first intervention, it is shown that people, when offered the possibility, are keen on staying on the sun illuminated square. All what the square primarily needs to become a lively hub is a small amount of offered facilities to amply enjoy it. What was striking during the first experiment, is that the unabashed users did not seem to wonder at all about the origin of the available seating structures. Alongside the outcomes of the interviews where the participants have claimed their desire for improvements, it can be articulated that the citizens of Helsinki are open and responsive to change.

In order to become a life emancipator, some undertaking needs to be achieved on an esplanade. Such a place which represents by its signification a vast, open and often empty square, constitutes a particular case for revitalization. Indeed, it is a peculiar thing to devote planning efforts to a sterile base. Surely an esplanade should be perceived as a creational opportunity, an available white canvas waiting to receive colours and shapes. Getting on with the tangible evolution of a place, a first enterprise should however be to listen and observe, and this namely immersed in the specific situation. Indeed, a complex structure is more easily apprehended with the introduction of the close look to a global view, thus gaining in fine grain understanding. Also when a context and its key issues are accurately outlined, then can only start the gradual change implementation.

Smooth transition or disruption, what is impor-

tant, is that means are provided to set the wheel of change in motion, thus the square will finally be capable of performing its eternal evolution and re-invention. The beginning of a transformation is a good thing for an under-used place, but a long-term vision, a strategy built upon the acquired setting-specific understanding is what secures a suitable path. An instituted frame for change coming from top-down measures should however encourage bottom-up initiatives in order to set up a low threshold fostering enlivenment through participation and involvement. The act to give the opportunity for people to spontaneously get together or maybe organize a cultural performance crystallises the fundamentals of a democratic public place. Openness, freedom, self-expression, inclusivity, etc., so many terms characterising our democratic ideal that should also be felt in real life around us.

Whilst the City is the one responsible for giving proper and clear incentives that initiate spontaneous and casual uses of its plazas, the message is currently wrongly conveyed. In the example of Hakaniemi Square and its mid-afternoon maintenance, the sudden appearance of massive cleaning trucks with long-distance water jets does not send a welcoming missive indeed. Anew is here advanced that the quality which characterises a square does not only reside in the elements contained in the square, but also in the way a public place is designed to work. Incontestably the meaning given to a square, formed by all these various decisive factors, can trigger a greater use and so create a safer and more pleasant place.

To synthetize the present situation; it is under the excuse of a necessary but excessive daily cleaning of the place that benches represent a negligible amount, whereas the declared intention of the City is to show to its inhabitants the magnitude and splendour of the offered public space. A counterintuitive discourse that underlines the need of a clear and coherent vision and that prejudices the accession to any favourable transformation. Thus, in regard of the research results but also the recently well-received Helsinki new urban plan, it is probably time to push the irrational apprehensions and the unfounded leth-

argy aside and place the trust in the future and the better else.

As here perceived, the way towards sustainable cities and societies is a shared responsibility conjoint to many diverse stakeholders and holds various complex interconnected procedures. However, to know that a change can start on the small scale, directly on the tangible ground is somehow reassuring and energizing.

6.4.6 Necessary social places

The two experiments had a focus on uncovering the behavioural responses to subtle change in a familiar place in order to gain understanding on how people relate to a space in their daily lives. The implicit goal of determining the fundamentals of a used, appreciated, and pleasant place activated the start of this research. Indubitably too, the half-concealed ambition of fostering social contacts and so improve social connectivity was at the origin of all of this. It is presently argued that social contacts oil the wheels of togetherness.

Public places are the social places of the urban environment and they play an important role in promoting social cohesion and mutual understanding. It is advanced that the welfare of a society is supported by the daily social interactions the members of a community can have. In order to diminish the natural effect of clusters and impending segregation, it is important to foster the collusions between the diverse groups of society. Every degree of acknowledgment, from a blink to a conversation, has its importance in including each particle in a solid whole. In that respect, this can only be enabled through inclusive common shared spaces. As it exists, a relationship between the space and the user and his subsequent behaviour, a careful spatial planning is for that reason significant.

Furthermore, public places are important as they play a considerable role as a social regulator as they hold within their perimeter diverse social rituals that continually compose the rules of living together (21). Holding collectively demands a

certain amount of organization, self-check, and constantly rewritten set of principles. People in a same space are the very peacekeepers of their commonwealth. The reactions to others, the positive or negative responses to a behaviour allow each individual to adapt his conduct according to tacit constitutional edicts of a community. In a sum, the streets and public squares of a city are the places where the social learning happens, where the social conventions are balanced and levelled, and therefore constitute a fundamental element to the maintenance of the society (22).

Places are the “significant centres of our immediate experiences of the world” (Relph 1976, p. 141), they are windows open to what is out there. If one considers the public space, the commonly owned outdoor space, this physical entity is the contact point with the world, with the society, with everything that makes us what we are. As it is for the benefit of a society to cherish and enjoy these opportunities of contact, the touch points in question should be made more evident, usable, functional, and attractive. Also nowadays at the digital era when people are free to select beyond any spatial or temporal borders with whom and where they wish to interact, the reassuring physicality of things builds a necessary anchor to keep certain bonds strong. Indeed, the direct social interactions should be contemplated as the tangible bridges or the glue that sticks all elements together and so prevents the collapse of a society.

6.4.7 Necessary care of public places and the relevance of Design

In order to sustain the living together, an attentive urban design is then required. In the prospect of the user-space-behaviour link, a quality space enables social contacts and thus supports the sustainability of the society. But societal sustainability is not to be regarded only from an interactional point of view. Indeed, what has federated people thousands of years ago is the survival instinct and the drive for safety but what has ruled their association is also the interest in a reciprocal

gain situation. At the foundation of every city was the compulsion to trade and exchange goods. Hence the necessity of good public places should also be considered from a commercial perspective. The argument can then be made that lively places in an urban setting, including the vast ones, support commercial sustainability. In our case study for example, a revitalisation that implements a round-the-clock use, would assuredly bring a panel of satellite activities if these naturally receive the suitable frame to flourish. When managed adequately, an esplanade represents a considerable capital to foster the creation of new businesses.

Evidently, the economic welfare is strongly linked to the social one. To facilitate these varied transactions, one also needs to recognize the importance of safety, which is a central notion in the decision of people who have the choice to go or not to a place. When a space is occupied by many people it is automatically felt as safer than a desolated one. The more a space is neglected, the more it attracts disrespect and similarly behaving public. Hence its is preferable for the general sustainability of a city that every space is given the proper conditions to welcome various people. Supporting the harmonious combination of cities and civilization, Renzo Piano said to CityLab in an interview: «I believe that humanity gravitates towards cities while monsters grow in darkness and isolation.” (Byrnes, 2017). In a sort, the declaration is also a statement advocating the necessity of urban spaces to include all kinds of people and so make them work together.

All over the world the consciousness on the fate of public places has steadily grown. Indeed, in recent years awareness has been commonly raised and the importance of the urban settings on the quality of lives of billions of humans made more apparent. The United Nations adopted a worldwide New Urban Agenda last year, setting rules for integrative and human environments, while various conventions connect different countries in their collaboration on urban development with common objectives. This way the forces are organised and group themselves so to oppose what Whyte denounced in a famous statement:

“It is difficult to design a space that will not attract people. What is remarkable is how often this has been accomplished.” (Whyte, 1988, p. 109)

Finally, every improvement, each modification has a broader enlarged impact that spreads on a multitude of different interconnected elements is a fact to be considered. Like the butterfly effect, the simplest things are capable of affecting a wide range of other objects. The small scale, namely a square, can have substantial repercussions for an entire neighbourhood or town. Indeed, as stated in numerous articles based on scientific researches, a plaza, especially that prominent, has the power to alter the image of a district, the symbolic or renown of a city, but it can also influence the people’s well-being, diminish health issues, increase the cash flow, attract investors, possibly bring international attention, and raise the competitiveness of the metropolis. In order to exercise a minimum of control and guide these forces into the desired direction, a defined plan and design of the stage of all happenings is consequently to be considered as crucial.

Design is a word that appears over and over again and is on everyone’s lips. One is evidently in the right to wonder what is the relevance of design for the welfare of cities. Design is a discipline that goes beyond the physical planning of a space but should be regarded as a mean to draw sense out of complex structural problematic. It allows to confer to an intricate issue a broaden and heterogeneous perspective towards a comprehensive set of solutions. Indeed, a resolution is never an easy task and could definitely profit from a sensible amount of creativity. In the respect of a more specific designation of the branch, Urban Design is not only about putting an additional bench and deciding on its

21. Hasset, B. (2017). *A tale of four skulls: what human bones reveal about cities*. The Guardian. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2017/feb/22/tale-four-skulls-what-can-bones-teach-about-cities>

22. Carmona, M. (2003). *Public places - Urban spaces: The dimensions of urban design*. Oxford; Boston: Architectural Press.

colour, but it also represents a set of skills that create a space, its usability, its relation to the surroundings, its atmosphere, etc. The advantage that represents Urban Design over Urban Planning is that it brings a micro perspective and a care for details to the profession, which both have their importance in the perception and so the appreciation of a space. Urban Design is relevant in that it works to provide a suitable décor for action and movement.

6.4.8 A Final Point

As a final summary of all things stated so far, the context and the spatial quality matter in relation to the quality of people's lives. Esplanades are often left to their state of vast open empty places and so constitute careless and defective environments in our cities. Sometimes felt as unwelcoming and unsafe, when left bare they often are the theatre of delinquent activities and undesired grouping. It seems that Helsinki City has purposely made the decision, in the manner of a deserter, to leave it entirely desolated by late afternoon in order to avoid any sort of life in it. Nonetheless it is the duty of a publicly owned square to provide an open set of circumstances that give free way to the people to make things happen and incarnate their role as action producers and societal actors.

7. Proposal

7.1. Representativeness and useful knowledge transfer

7.1.1 Representativeness and reproducibility

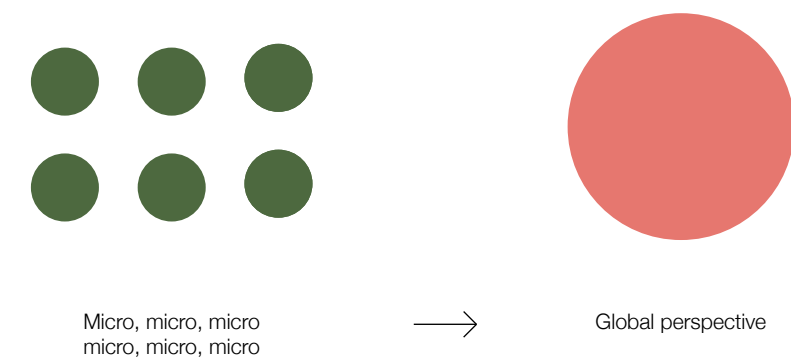
In the literature review has been stated Jackson's concern about the representativeness of a study for it to become valid and valuable. Equally, the following section wishes to put the heretofore conducted research into perspective and lead the results towards a generic data base with a common language for the treatment of esplanades. The aim is to transform the accumulated knowledge into a transferable substance that can be taken out of its contextual origin and implemented into various settings. Indeed, finding ways to make successful enterprises replicable and adaptable is a chance to reach a larger spectrum of individuals – the space users and the space planners alike - towards a general and collective improvement.

Addressing the challenge of a universalized set of principles, the following chapter will take a greater distance from the close look and point towards a comparative analysis. The care to represent and so concern any esplanade anywhere is here at play. By taking few steps back and looking at diverse similar cases, it is ambitioned to gain a more extensive regard that would help towards the definition of common elements to a space

and requirements for a place. Consequently, the intent is that external ethnographies and a collection of international typologies will support both comparative and analogical learning.

7.1.2 Comparative observations

Looking at other esplanades over Europe and see how these work, is a great source of inspiration and an occasion to find similar contexts and potential inductions for change. To look beyond one's own nose is always an opportunity to open the mind and make discoveries. Like a constant fuel for ideas, a new encounter allows a self-evaluation and a thoughtful placement in the play. Let me take you on a lively final tour to different squares and esplanades in Europe and get to grasp the atmospheres that compose these unique places. Getting an insight into the lives of three different public places, the narrative will guide the attention towards the social interactions and performed behaviours influenced by the space. These diverse places with contrasted success have in common their careful planning and, like Hakaniemen Tori, their ample measurements.



To begin with, we can calmly settle down on the bright and smooth floor surface of the Place de la République in Paris. Built of light beige large rectangular stones, the pavement reflects generously the sunlight onto the proximate splendid buildings in Haussmann-style and the central Statue de la République. Equipped with three large staircases leading a continuous flow of commuters in and out of the metro, the large square is rather busy at every hour of the day. Three of its four sides are bordered with crowded avenues, the fourth one is a balanced mix between a public transportation street and a walkway. Newly redesigned, this former roundabout in the 11e Arrondissement is now a highly appreciated place by pedestrians and among different groups of users. In the late afternoon hours of summer, when sunrays become more gentle, a relaxed

crowd among the rapid strollers can be spotted. People from every group age are sitting on red metallic chairs and on benches, reading, looking around, discussing, arguing, laughing, watching their children in swimming suits playing around the water jets coming out of the ground. Around the statue people are standing, talking on the phone, texting, and suddenly walking to kiss an arriving acquaintance. Young men with branded caps and sneakers sit on the ramp on top of the stairs, they discuss intensely and some silently scrutinize the busy pack. Skateboarders drive back and forth trying figures. Different tempos and rhythms run the show, everyone at its business blinking at people who cross their path.

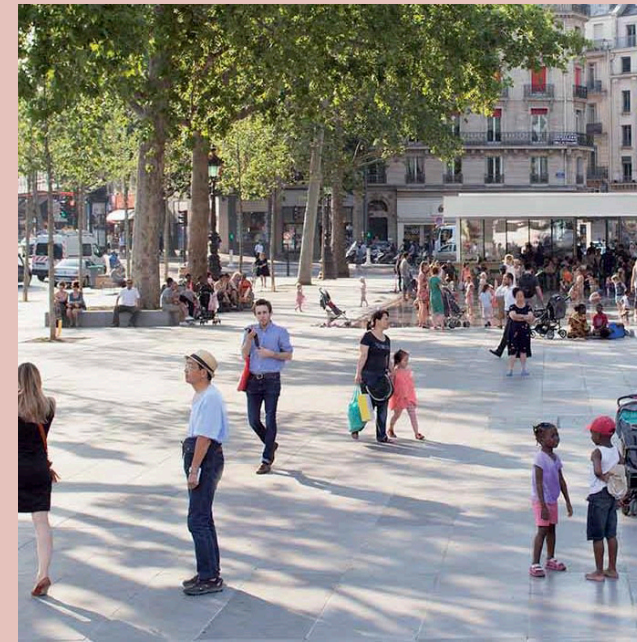
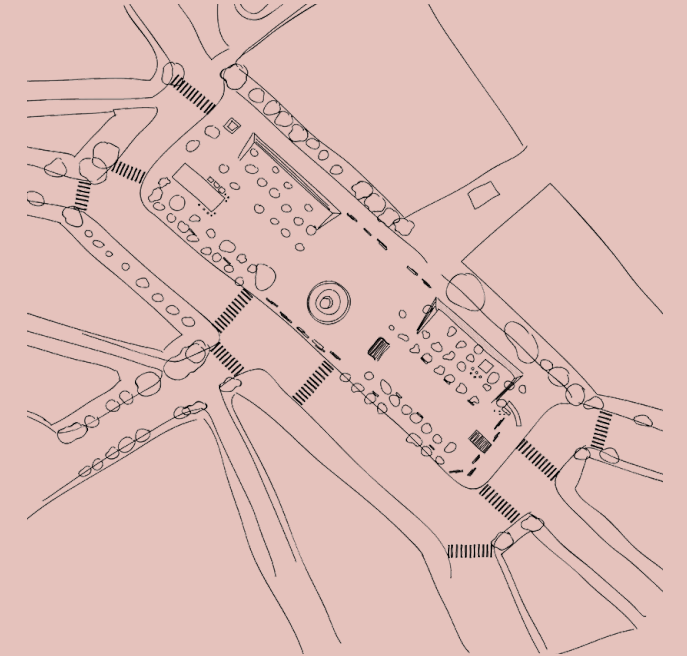


Fig. 6 Place de la République, Paris, France



With a more energetic temper we can also walk across Puerta del Sol in Madrid. The noisy and intense half-moon shaped square is a major landmark of the capital. The esplanade is crossed at its longest extremity by a road and is mostly surrounded by massive neoclassical housing blocks. In this emblematic square that builds a milestone in the life of the Madrilenians, people meet, people stand, and people walk to the metro, to boutiques, or to restaurants. On a rather cold late morning in spring the sun shines high and the esplanade is already fairly animated. Seemingly still street performers make the tourists startle, street vendors display sunglasses and umbrellas, young people distribute flyers. A woman films a trio playing classical music in front of a famous department store with her phone, a small child throws a coin to the cello case before

running back to his mother. A group dressed with used dark clothes sits on the base of the central fountain watching the tourists in colourful quilted jackets taking selfies. The kiosk seller is in a deep conversation with an old man with a grey beret, a horde of young students rushes in front of the posh boutiques. The mass swarms into different directions in a spasmodic but constant procession.

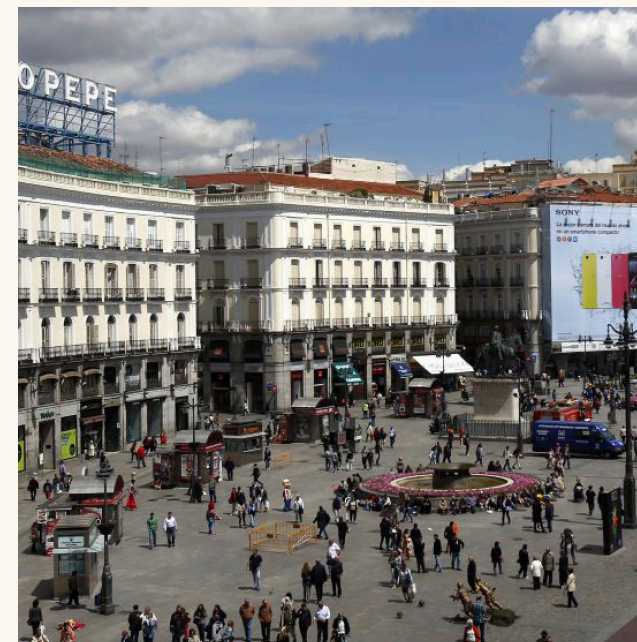


Fig. 7 Puerta del Sol, Madrid, Spain



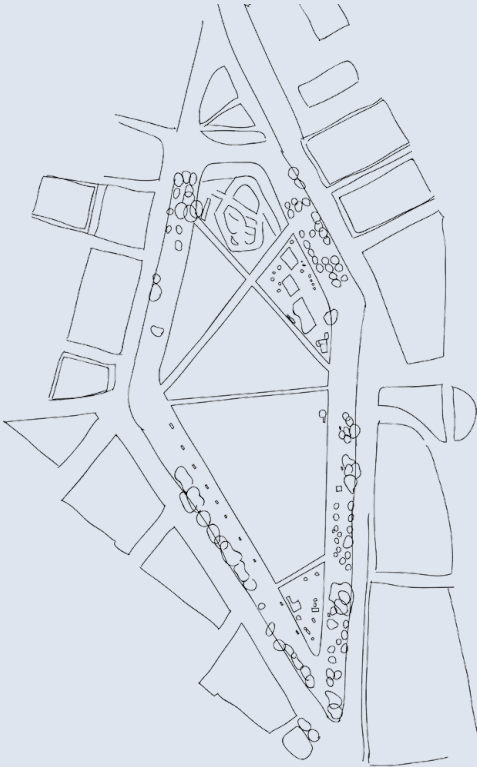
Moving back up to the middle of Europe, we land in Switzerland, Geneva, where the plaza Plainpalais sits near the lake. Less visited than the Spanish and French examples, what this esplanade has in common with Hakaniemi, is the isolation from the shopping and offices streets by the high density traffic roads circling its perimeter. Redeveloped in recent years, the former muddy square is now clad with clay court and concrete tiling and is furnished with various seating facilities. On its north end a skate park has been constructed, where three men are performing tricks while a little boy is testing his bike on the slopes not far from his cautious mother. They are not many people on this weekday morning of December, the pace of strollers is rather slow. Few market tents fight the ground with the army of stands and machines installed for the fun fair, and the sellers look around waiting for customers. Two women are sitting on a bench their faces turned towards the sun and to the bigger part of the square, a man next to them is

reading a newspaper on the apposed table facing the other direction. Not more than two meters away three individuals in heavy winter jackets form a small circle as they stand together with two prams and are chatting together.

The refurbishment of the 70'000 square-meters lozenge square has been conceived so to leave the space very flexible as many sizable cultural events and fairs often take place there. However, concrete benches, water fountains or diverse services pavilions are to be found on its external edges. The planting on the left hand side of the square creates a sense of intimacy in the space and is surrounded by solid seating structures. An efficient pedestrian circulation is facilitated by the concrete paver which builds crossing pathways through the crushed granite covering.

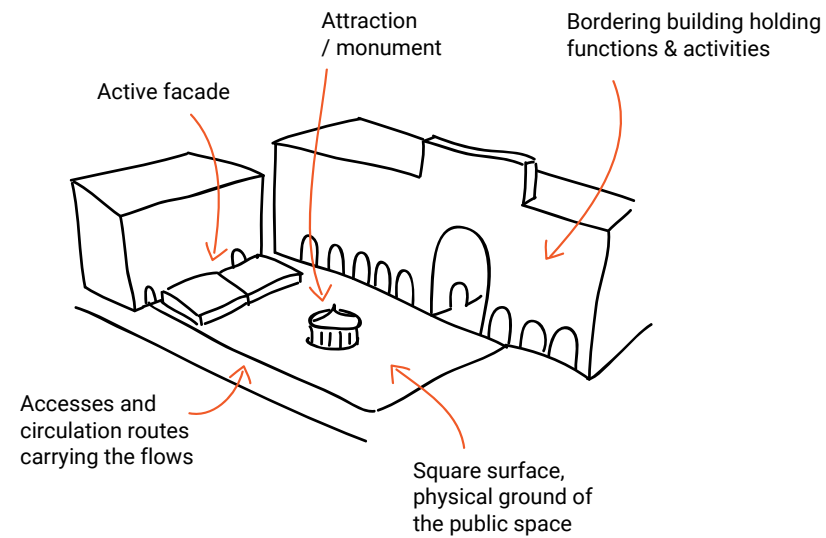


Plaine de Plainpalais, Genève, Switzerland



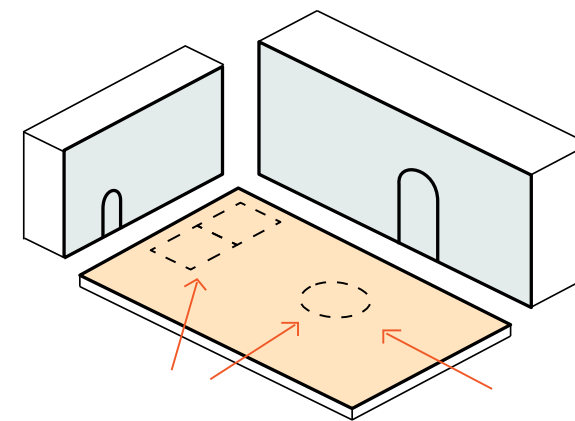
7.1.3 Analogical learning

Moreover to push the comparative juxtaposition to a more abstract and architectural level, square typologies of all over the world have been collected. To be considered as a source of inspiration, this basic design method of benchmarking hopes to firstly stimulate the thoughts on possibilities, and secondly to support the creation of a generic square drawing. The cited general outline should then serve a shared comprehension on public square and support the knowledge transfer.

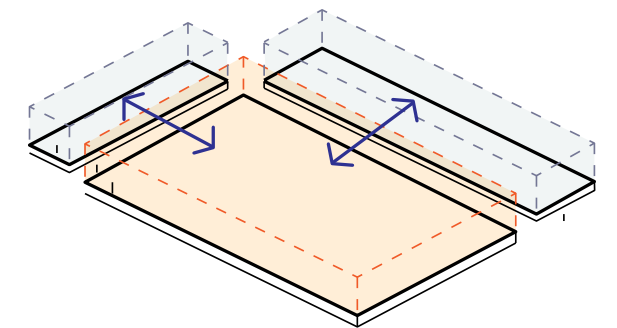


Additionally, mind-broadening pictures represent a beneficial element that nourishes the brain, but also helps to situate one thoughts and creative impulse. Indeed, taking a look from a distance with half-pleated eyes allows the contemplator to realign its reasoning and apprehend the matter from a different angle. As the goal here is to approach the topic of the esplanades' planning on regard of its reproducibility, a good inspirational base can represent an asset to comprehend the necessary tangibles for any applied venture.

The grid proposes specific points of observation in the shape of a free classification. Like a random selection the document offers an extensive look into the diverse spatial features a space can hold. The reader is encouraged to scrutinise the relation to the street, the presence of facilities, the textures and care in details, the delimitations of space, etc. As an invitation to awake the gaze, the typologies paired with the generic outline are a multi-directional handy tool for designing and developing the esplanades.



surfaces constituting the square and the attraction centre



on the square / around the square exchange and inter-influence



Fig. 8. Time Square, NY



Piazza di Spagna, Roma



Fig. 9 Garten des Gedankens, Marburg



Fig. 15 Vieux Port, Marseille



Fig. 16 Pigalle Duperré, Paris



Fig. 17 Sechseläutenplatz, Zürich



Fig. 10 Place inversée, Barcelona - Camille Rajotte

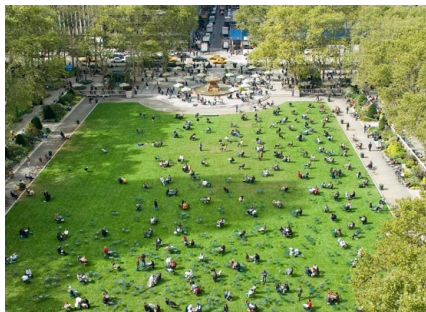


Fig. 11 Bryant Park, New York



Fig. 12 Casco Histórico, Zamora



Fig. 18 Gertrudenkirchhof, Hamburg



Fig. 19 Place d'Armes, Montréal



Fig. 20 Zocalo, Mexico



Plaza Mayor, Madrid



Fig. 13 Berges Rive Gauche, Lyon



Fig. 14 Mille plateaux



Fig. 21 Old town square, Maastricht



Fig. 22 Piazza del Campo, Siena



Fig. 23 Scholars' Green Park, Toronto - Gh3

7.1.4 Comparative learning

What stands out when comparing the described squares, is that the international examples are equally equipped with temporary attractions points and amenities, but what differs irremediably from the Helsinki case, is that those squares provide also non-temporary structures to users for staying. As the Swiss example masters its transformation from a major public square to a host of large events with surprising agility, the two other esplanades remain very urban in their everyday, complemented with few punctual events. What these permanent facilities affect, is the potential of the esplanades to welcome all types of users and spontaneous lingering at every hour of the day and the night and thus certainly increases simultaneously the social interactions at every level.

As clarified in the literature review, not only the tangible elements of a place matter, but the offering in uses by services and businesses are of an importance in attracting people. As a matter of fact, in Place de la République there is a pavilion bar to be found, in Puerta del Sol many restaurants sit on the close perimeter and never-leaving street performers. They represent places of life where one feels safe at every hour and doesn't avoid it but rather place it in their itinerary. Discordantly, such a trustful use of the public place is not representative of the Swiss example. Like in the case of Hakaniemi, Plainpalais Square does not hold a direct connection to the bottom of the surrounding buildings filled with shops, restaurants, dwellings, etc. Consequently the permeability between the streets and the square is diminished and people are not necessarily disposed to make use of the square in their journey at night. However, due to the permanent facilities and recurrent evening happenings, night users are often spotted on the square.

A common characteristic of the Finnish case and the French and Spanish ones, is that they all play the role of a major transportation junction. Following the example of its associates, Hakaniemen Tori should seize the chance to welcome and retain the continuous flow of people in order to

become a lively and confident place to everyone at every time.

Often raising the argument of the cultural difference, the somehow skittish dissidents do not want to take the social changes and the evolution in the expectation of the population into account. If something is not considered as usual, simply because it is not offered in the first place, it doesn't mean people wouldn't gladly receive it. Instead, the fact of providing welcoming frames of social life and finding ways to activate the urban and social transition Finland is subjected to will provide free and positive space for these changes to happen.

Through the exemplification offered by the typologies collection, many represented places are located in regions where cold temperatures are a common thing and yet they are designed with a strong focus on the people that will inhabit them. So finally it is argued that the often enunciated weather constraints are not a valid argument for leaving spaces all time desolated and not taken care of.

7.2. Reproducibility on base of a case example

7.2.1 Adaptability and knowledge composite

Nonetheless, after broadening the perspective and providing room to the analysis, the challenge is set to find ways to allow an agile displacement towards the micro angle, the close look. This is so to facilitate the migration of the universalising findings to various specific locations and contexts. Adaptability is indeed a necessary concept for the materialisation of generic knowledge. As every place is particular and entails its own character, it is crucial to understand each situation as unique and treat the revitalization's ingredients with great care. Indeed, a successful recipe requires an environment-sensitive approach.

In order to support a smooth and convenient knowledge transfer, it is effective to establish a common discussion base and raise the awareness for the case. To that end, the provision of a tool book can be favourable to articulate an open dialogue via explicit statements. Indeed, with the help of precise illustrations the message gets clarified and more impactful.

Design guidelines are a very popular tool to propagate ideas and solution paths, therefore they have been widely spread in recent years by the Cities that share them as online open data.

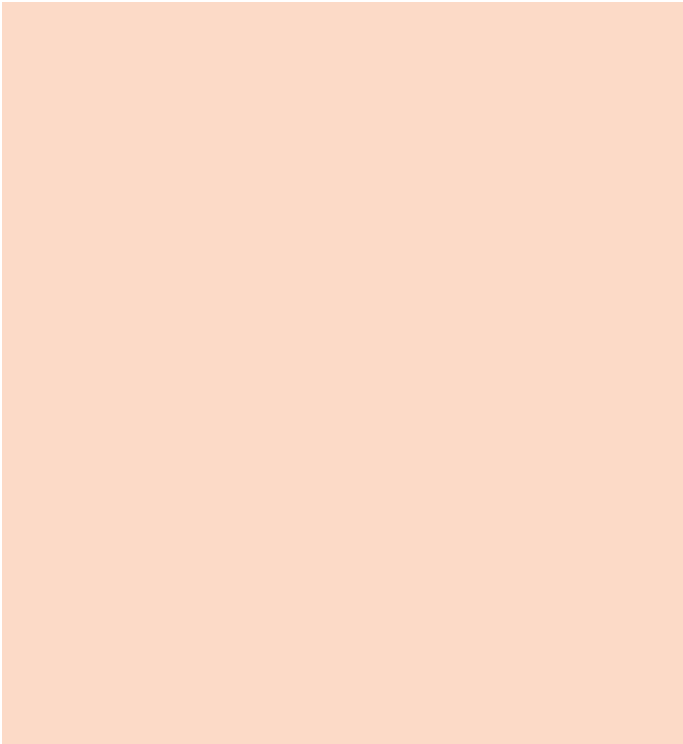
Usually the guidebooks provided by public authorities are either focused on street regulation details addressing their commercial actors or composing a very general space-making manual providing inspiring guidelines. These manuals

are often self-promoting and mostly distributed for the purpose of communicating new political doctrines to the public. Often dealing with the topics of slow mobility, traffic regulation or streets' stimulation, these directories do not integrate setting-specific guidance.

Thereupon it is here intended to create a sort of formula leaflet to the management of esplanades. Like a reference book on big squares and their appropriate urban design and planning, the handbook works towards the initiation of a conversation to act on empty places that obstruct the life in our cities. Based both on spatial experimentations and on theoretical research, it offers a mixture of knowledge with the aim to regroup the global "golden rules" for successful sizable public places. Favouring applied solutions and a graphic understanding of the situation, the practical glossary aspires to activate concrete realisable change.

7.2.2 A handbook

As a final provision to this Masters thesis, the condensed and general learning on the urban design of esplanades has been assembled into a humble graphic handbook in the shape of a poster. It aspires to serve as a vade mecum for planners and decision makers, but also as an educational compendium to anyone who cares about the urban environment but doesn't know where to start. Relying upon the case example (Hakaniemi Square) of the present work, the pamphlet ventures to establish relevant keys for the revitalisation of the space and to transform them into replicable and adaptable fundamentals.



8. Conclusions



Cities will be in a near future the stage of most happenings in the world, and will thus carry a great role in the human lives. Therefore the present thesis claims a necessary renewed focus on users, ergo the reintroduction of a humanism in the public places. In that prospect, design is pleaded as an especially suitable mean to serve such intent.

Design provides more than ergonomic features and pleasurable artefacts. Indeed beyond tangible inputs, the value of design is to provide a sensitive, multi-faceted and human-centred perspective to complex ecosystems. It carries the ability to look from outside-in and to create new processes and services building as many touch points that shape the user's experience and thus the appreciation of his environment. Then «the most sustainable cities in the world are the ones loved by their inhabitants» (23). "Design is a creative, exploratory and problem-solving activity through which objectives and constraints are weighed and balanced, the problem and possible solutions explored, and optimal resolutions derived" (Carmona, 2003, p.54). Then design genuinely aims to simplify and better the sometimes tangled situations.

But more than an ode to design only, the wish here is to promote and endorse a much needed multidisciplinary in the urban planning profession. Like in real life, the resolution of complex equations require a whole set of different eyes, opinions and visions put together in a holistic manner. The fact that the well-known authors of the public place research appear not to have yet

been heard after all these years, clearly shows the ever present need for a more human-centred culture in the public planning operations.

Then to plan the public space is to plan for the people, like the reciprocal influence of space and society has been demonstrated. The social relations are constituted through the space, constrained and mediated by the space. A society also identifies itself and is expressed through its public spaces. So what does a major square tells to the people and of the people when it seems to have appeared by a clumsy accident? Assessing the status of sizable places, we need to think in term of value and prejudice towards a city and its inhabitants. Then "what doesn't support us, harms us" (24).

As the tone of the thesis might sound for some people rather naïve, it is necessary to here clarify the dialogue. When it is stated that public spaces are necessary to the social cohesion, underlined is of course the understanding that they are only one of the multiple keys for social balance. Further by «social cohesion» here is not at all meant «social homogenization» - a contradictory and cataclysmic utopia - but rather a social agreement or equilibrium, that all parts of a society find when coming together. Exclusion and solitude is one of the most severe woes and cause of disease in our society (Thackara, 2008). Collective spaces are in that meaningful that they give a chance for every sort of people to be part of their environment.

Esplanades

Finally when the appraisal of a massive square is rather contrasted and the occupancy count figures show a deserted place, it might be worth to consider to work on it and try out a change. “The creation and production of urban environments often occurs by omission rather than commission” (Carmona, 2003, p.16). Consequently it is emphasized that for a situation to improve, one needs to commit to change and dare to support incremental betterment. Having a positive attitude towards bottom-up initiatives and encourage them via supportive top-down measures and affordances can mean a great deal of difference for the quality of a city. Helsinki City is a very open institution usually agreeable with the cultural and social initiatives of its citizens. The thesis however wishes to accentuate that an anaemic physical frame hinders actions to be perceivable and simply doable by whoever, especially by the ones not possessing the keys to approach the authorities. An attentively planned common place is meaningful for it makes openness visible and is coherent to a user-centric ideology.

In order to get lively cities and vibrant esplanades all around the globe, I lastly recommend to follow these few affordable commands: observe, ask, understand, but also try and test; in a sum do.

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All other pictures or illustrations by Zoé Blanchard

Annex

interview sheet template

p. 113

users’ count on experiment 1

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technical drawings of the benches

p. 115

Right hand-side: user’s interview template

Interview form on Hakaniemin tori (Hakaniemi square)

Aalto University 2017
Zoé Blanchard / Masters Thesis on Public Places

This interview is addressed to the users of Hakaniemi square - habitués and occasional visitors alike. It has for purpose to find out more about your opinion and appreciation on Hakaniemi’s urban life and its perceived quality as a public place. Speaking out your ideas and outdoor habits will help to uncover the beat and potential of Hakaniemi square.

How much do you agree (0 not at all, 5 very):

0

+

+

+

+

5

Hakaniemi square is popular

0

+

+

+

+

5

I think Hakaniemi square is a great place

0

+

+

+

+

5

I tend to avoid the square

0

+

+

+

+

5

I feel comfortable in the square

0

+

+

+

+

5

Hakaniemi square is inviting

0

+

+

+

+

5

I appreciate the functions the square is providing to the public

0

+

+

+

+

5

Hakaniemi square is a lively hub offering vibrant urban life

Outdoors - habits and behaviour:

By outdoors is meant all the exterior space put at disposal to the public.

What are the most decisive elements that make you go outdoors in your free time? (choose 3)

meeting friends

quality of the outdoors

enjoy the sun

take some fresh air

break between two activities

look around, observe people

stay healthy

passive recreational activity

do sport

relax

entertainment

other

What are the most important qualities that make you stay outdoors? (choose 2)

pleasant weather

a lot is happening

peaceful and quiet atmosphere

beautiful view

intimacy, privacy feeling

neighbourly spirit

other

When visiting Hakaniemi square, what are usually the reasons for you to be there? (free answer)

Hakaniemi - a public place:

By public place is meant the outdoor urban squares and leisure areas open to everyone. The parks and plazas in a city are containers and developers of urban life. (0 not at all, 5 very)

How important is it for you to have welcoming urban places in your city?

0

+

+

+

+

5

How satisfied are you with the opportunities to spend time in the public places of Helsinki?

0

+

+

+

+

5

How do you appreciate the general quality of the outdoor public space of Hakaniemi?

0

+

+

+

+

5

How would you rate the atmosphere of Hakaniemi as a public place?

0

+

+

+

+

5

What are the most crucial elements for a good city square, urban park? (choose 3)

seating facilities

shelter offering

aesthetics properties

commercial offering (cafés)

nature

equipment's quality

walkability

sound

people

sunlight

sport facilities

traffic barrier

scenery, view

accessibility

soft acoustic

micro-climate

cultural offer

other:

What would you consider is often missing in the public places of Helsinki and particularly in Hakaniemi? (free answer)

What in your opinion would improve the quality of Hakaniemi square? (free answer)

How long have you been familiar with Hakaniemi square? (years)

0

/

1-3

/

3-5

/

5+

How often in a week would you say you are visiting the square in Summer time?

0

/

1

/

2

/

3

/

4

/

5+

How much time in average (minutes)?

0-10

/

11-20

/

21-30

/

31-40

/

41-50

/

51-60

/

61-90

/

91-120

/

121+

How often in a week would you say you are visiting the square in Winter time?

0

/

1

/

2

/

3

/

4

/

5+

How much time in average (minutes)?

0-10

/

11-20

/

21-30

/

31-40

/

41-50

/

51-60

/

61-90

/

91-120

/

121+

Age: 9-14 / 15-29 / 30-45 / 46-60 / 61-70 / 71+

City of residency:

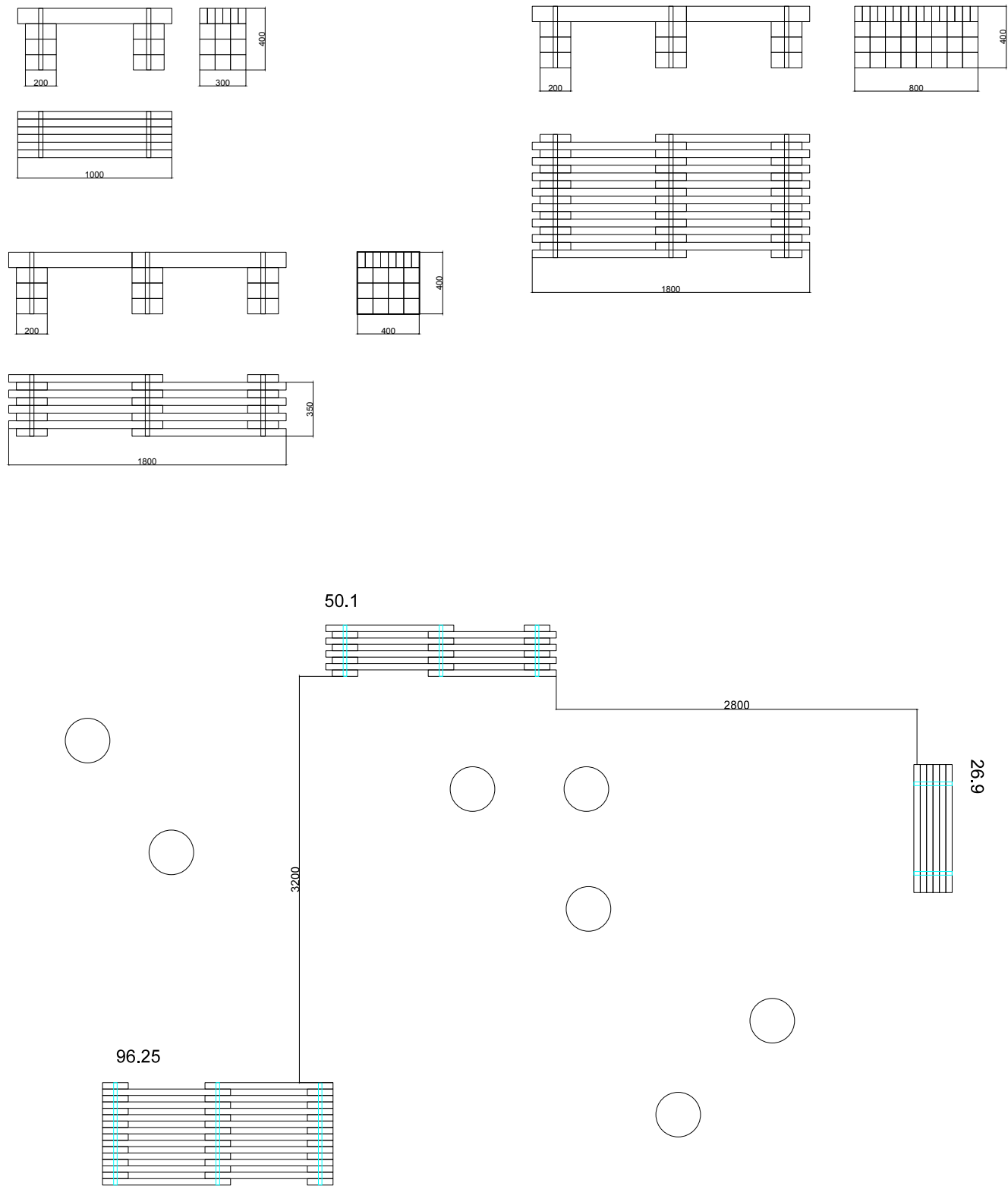
Nationality:

Esplanades

	seated	s. watchers	s. relaxing	s. busy	s. talking	scouts	walkers	
16h00	4	3	3	1	2	1	-	
16h15	1	-	-	1	-	-	6	
16h30	2	-	-	2	-	-	9	
16h45	7	5	-	-	4	2	1	
17h00	5	1	-	-	4	1	7	
17h15	-	-	-	-	-	-	15	◀ cleaners
17h30	2	2	-	-	2	1	5	
17h45	4	-	-	-	4	2	10	
18h00	4	3	-	-	4	-	3	
18h30	3	-	1	1	2	-	8	
19h00	2	1	-	1	-	-	25	
19h30	3	2	-	1	2	-	16	
20h00	4	4	-	-	4	-	10	
20h30	4	-	-	-	4	-	-	
21h00	2	2	-	-	2	-	8	
21h30	1	-	-	-	-	-	7	
22h00	2	-	-	-	2	-	12	
22h30	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	

Punctual record of behaviours in immediate surrounding of the benches taken every fifteen-thirty minutes during the intervention I

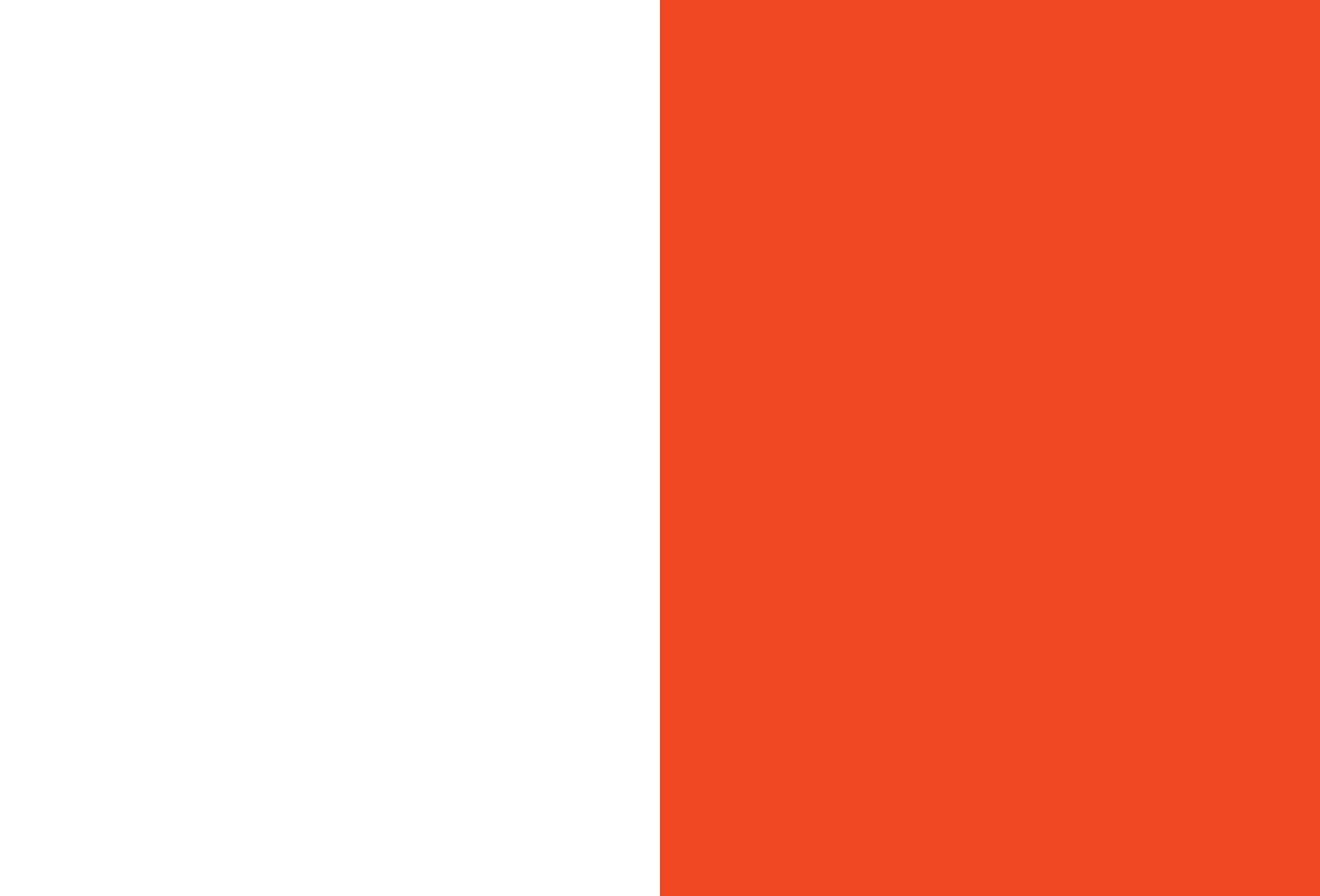
Users' count on experiment 1



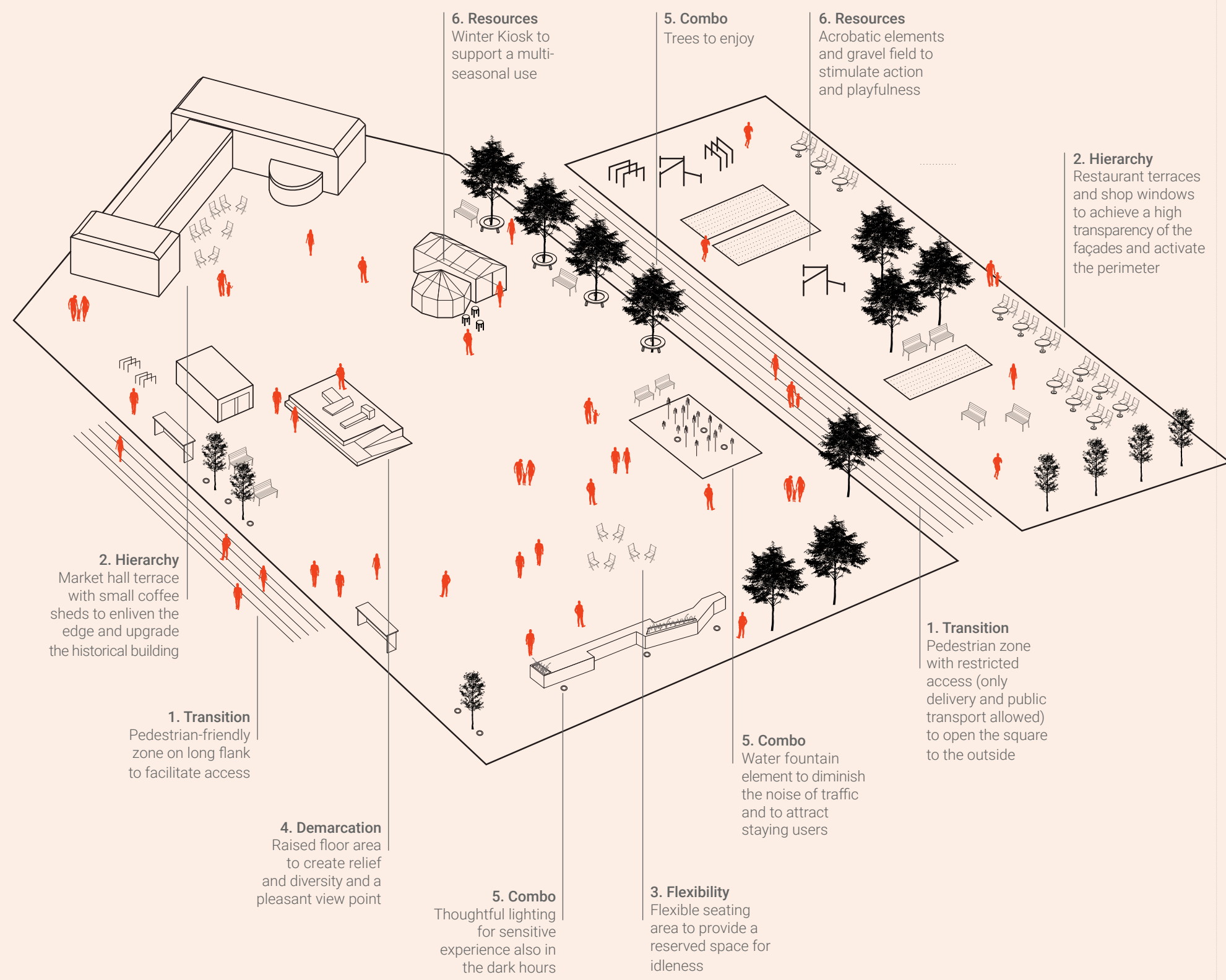
Technical drawings of the benches

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My parents and my family
All my talented, loyal, and lovely friends



The Activation of an Esplanade - an axonometric concept view

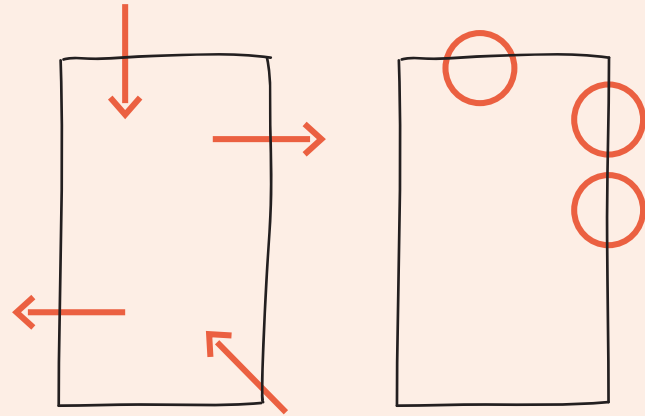


A Handbook to the Revitalisation of Esplanades

6 Roadmap steps

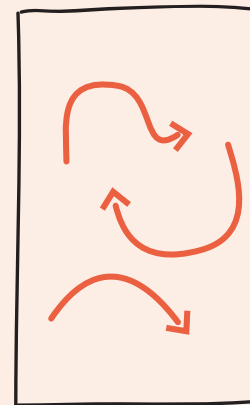
The 6 Why's

- 1. Raise attractiveness
= economical sustainability
- 2. Foster social interactions
= social sustainability
- 3. Provide for individual well-being and health
= social welfare
- 4. Enhance safety
= social stability
- 5. Encourage creation and evolution
(business incubator, communities, cultural boom, etc.)
- 6. Simply support life



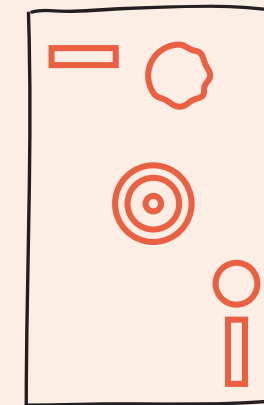
1. Transition

Raise city-square connection and exchange by giving attention to the borders and people flows



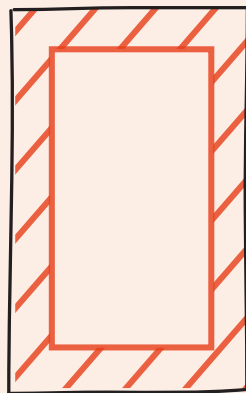
3. Flexibility preservation

Maintain a spacious centre for larger events



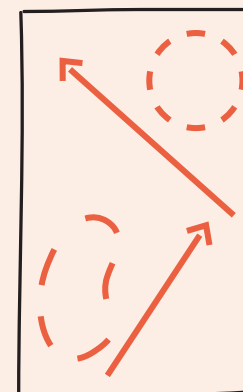
5. Usual Planning Combo

Consider the elementary components of public places supporting an all year round use: lighting, seating, shelter, green, noise barrier, etc.



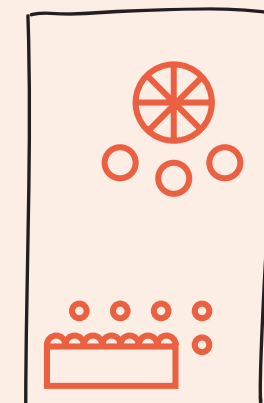
2. Hierarchy in activeness

Understand duality and duplicity in the esplanade's use and activate the edges



4. Demarcation

Define diverse zones of use and play with the grid



6. Resources for activeness

Invest for a diversification of uses and allocate semi-permanent structures to businesses boosting round-the-clock activity